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Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Proposed budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019

Report of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee

Summary

The present report contains the comments, advice and recommendations of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee on the proposed budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

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I. Introduction

1. The Independent Audit Advisory Committee presents herein its comments, advice and recommendations to the General Assembly, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, on the budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019. The report is submitted in accordance with paragraphs 2 (c) and (d) of the Committee's terms of reference (General Assembly resolution 61/275, annex).

2. The Committee has a responsibility to examine the workplan of OIOS, taking into account the workplans of the other oversight bodies, and to advise the General Assembly thereon, to review the budget proposal of the Office, taking into account its workplan, and to make recommendations to the Assembly through the Advisory Committee. The Committee undertook its review of the OIOS work-planning process and the proposed budget for OIOS under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 during its fortieth and forty-first sessions, held from 12 to 15 December 2017 and 21 to 23 February 2018, respectively.

3. The Committee appreciates the efforts of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts and OIOS in providing the Committee with the relevant documents for consideration. OIOS also provided supplementary information in response to various questions from the Committee.

II. Background

4. The proposed financial resources for OIOS for 2018/19, as compared with 2017/18, are provided in table 1.

Table 1
Financial resources
(Thousands of United States dollars)

			Variance		
	Approved 2017/18	*Proposed 2018/19*	*2017/18 budget vs. proposed 2018/19*	*(Percentage)*	*Percentage of total budget*
Internal Audit Division	16 708.20	16 593.30	-114.90	-0.7	57
Inspection and Evaluation Division	1 462.10	1 705.20	243.10	16.6	6
Investigations Division	9 191.60	10 077.40	885.80	9.6	35
Executive Office	648.80	637.10	-11.70	-1.8	2
Total	**28 010.70**	**29 013.00**	**1 002.30**	**3.6**	**100**

Note: Budget figures provided by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, Peacekeeping Financing Division.

5. As shown in table 1, the proposed OIOS budget under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 is estimated at $29,013,000 (gross), which represents an increase of $1,002,300 (gross), or 3.6 per cent, above the prior year's approved budget of $28,010,700 (gross). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the increase was due mainly to a non-discretionary

increase in relation to adjustments in standard salary, common staff costs and vacancy rates.

6. The Committee recognizes that the consideration of the OIOS budget proposals with regard to the specific grade level of OIOS posts and requests for non-post resources falls more appropriately within the remit of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The review, comments and advice of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee will therefore focus on the scope of its own terms of reference with respect to the work-planning and budgeting process of OIOS. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee will submit the present report to the General Assembly through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Arrangements will be made for interaction with the Advisory Committee to discuss the contents of the report.

III. Comments of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee

A. Internal Audit Division

7. In its previous report (A/71/800), the Committee made a number of recommendations relating to the work of OIOS in general and the work-planning and budgeting process of the Internal Audit Division in particular. The Committee notes that OIOS continues to make an effort to implement most of those recommendations. The Committee also notes that the Division continues to employ residual risk as the basis for its workplan. Although its share of the overall budget of OIOS has decreased, from 58 per cent, as reported last year, the Division still remains the largest of the three divisions and represents 57 per cent of the OIOS budget under the support account.

Workplan implementation

8. With respect to workplan implementation, the Committee was informed that, during the 2016/17 fiscal year, of the 97 assignments that the Division planned to conduct, 81 were completed by the target date. This represents an 84 per cent completion rate. The Committee noted that, according to OIOS programme impact pathways, the Division's workplan implementation target rate is 100 per cent of all assignments. The Committee was further informed that the shortfall in performance was attributed to: (a) evacuation of staff of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) after the July 2016 crisis in Juba; (b) vacancies in Entebbe, Uganda; (c) use of mission resources to form part of the team that conducted the General Assembly-mandated review and evaluation of the strategic deployment stocks; (d) involvement in working groups to further develop the Division's audit methodology and auditor's skills; and (e) with regard to 2017, the change in strategy relating to audit coverage.

9. **The Committee notes the good effort that the Division has put into workplan implementation and appreciates that some of the reasons for the shortfall were beyond the Division's control. The Committee also believes that the Division can improve its implementation rate with better planning. The Committee will follow-up on this issue in future sessions.**

Risk-based workplan

10. In paragraph 26 of its report on the budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July to 30 June 2011 (A/64/652), the Committee recommended that the Division adopt more robust audit workplans, that are based on residual risk. The Committee

was informed that the workplan for 2018/19 was part of a three-year rolling plan, and was developed using a revised risk-based approach, which involved: validation and update of audit universe/organization hierarchy; identification of strategic and business objectives of all organizational units; identification and assessment of key risks to the achievement of the objectives of all organizational units that could impact their programmes, functions, structures, processes and initiatives; clearer link/logical flow between organizational objectives, risks and selection of audit topics; alignment of scoring criteria and risk categories with the Secretariat's enterprise risk management framework; survey of information and communications technology risks/issues for all clients; and consideration of management requests for audits. OIOS indicated that the risk-ranked audit universe of auditable activities was developed taking into account: the impact and likelihood of risks, and controls that exist to manage risk; previous oversight activities; and the results of ongoing interactions/consultations with various divisions, management, the Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit.

11. Thus, with regard to the current resource request, the Committee was informed that the Division had enhanced the risk-based work-planning process and continued to provide for a clearer link between the Division risk registers and the Secretariat-wide enterprise risk register. The Committee was informed that there was also increased focus on and attention to: effectiveness and efficiency issues; fraud and mismanagement; and opportunities to work jointly with other OIOS divisions.

12. Accordingly, as shown in table 2, OIOS indicated that the Division plans to undertake 82 audit assignments related to peacekeeping operations for the fiscal period 2018/19. This represents an overall decrease of 4 assignments from the previous period. As table 2 shows, the biggest decrease (7 assignments) is in safety and security. According to OIOS, programme and project management continues to account for the largest number of audits, followed by logistics.

Table 2
Trends in the number and distribution of Internal Audit Division assignments

	Fiscal year								*Variance between 2017 and 2018*
Focus area	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*	*No. of assignments*
Logistics	13	16	19	28	16	29	8	15	7
Programme and project management	12	17	13	16	19	26	22	22	0
Property and facilities management	7	5	15	9	20	17	10	14	4
Safety and security	14	4	7	6	3	5	9	2	-7
Human resources management	10	4	8	17	18	9	11	12	1
Financial management	5	6	10	12	4	4	8	2	-6
Governance and strategy	8	10	1	0	0	0	10	5	-5
Information technology	3	3	3	10	4	3	3	6	3
Procurement	1	6	9	2	10	4	5	4	-1
Total assignments	**73**	**71**	**85**	**100**	**94**	**97**	**86**	**82**	**-4**

13. In section II, paragraph 3, of its resolution 71/7, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Committee that OIOS should explicitly show how Internal Audit Division workplans are guided by the Organization's critical enterprise risk strategy. Upon follow-up, the Committee was informed that 40 of the 86 assignments

addressed one or more of the six critical risks of the Organization. According to OIOS, human resources management and accountability, together with strategic planning and budget allocation, make up 65 per cent of the assignments. OIOS has indicated that it will continue to consult with management, the Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit during the period, monitor the risks identified in peace operations, and, if required, revise the workplan on the basis of emerging risks and priorities.

14. In addition, in paragraph 8 of its report on the activities of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for the period from 1 August 2009 to 31 July 2010 (A/65/329), the Committee noted that OIOS could add value to its oversight work by conducting more audits of cross-cutting and systemic issues, namely, thematic audits. The Committee therefore recommended that, in preparing its workplan, OIOS place greater emphasis on audits of cross-cutting issues in order to identify prevalent systemic issues that need to be addressed by management as a priority.

15. For 2018/19, OIOS indicated that 17 of the 82 assignments will be thematic engagements. It identified three high-risk thematic areas on which it planned to concentrate, namely: financial management; programme and project management; and governance and strategy.

16. Following feedback from management on how to make the work of OIOS work more effective and relevant to management, the Committee was informed that a stronger focus on performance audits and those which are more strategic would be very useful to managers.

17. **The Committee continues to commend OIOS for the effort made to show how the Division's workplans are guided by the Organization's critical enterprise risk strategy and for conducting thematic audits. The Committee nevertheless, calls upon OIOS to ensure that the choice of topics reflects a more strategic outlook with respect to the Organization's activities.**

Capacity gap analysis and budget proposal

18. In paragraph 17 of its report on the budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 (A/66/737), the Committee recommended that, as OIOS continues to move towards a robust risk-based approach to its workplan, it should conduct more analyses of its capacity gaps. The Committee was informed that the development of the current risk-based universe of auditable activities took into account: the impact and likelihood of risks; the assessment of the effectiveness of controls to mitigate risks; risk scores and relevance to key organizational objectives or cross-cutting issues; the previous oversight activities; the results of interactions during the year with the Inspection and Evaluation Division and the Investigations Division; and the results of ongoing consultations with management, the Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit.

19. According to the Division, the current risk-based planning paid special attention to: effectiveness and efficiency issues; emerging risks related to Sustainable Development Goals; fraud management; information and communications technology (ICT); and the ongoing Secretary-General's reform initiatives and the recently developed top risks of the Organization.

20. In this regard, the Division indicated that it had developed a list of audits that would address higher and medium-level residual risks over the next three years. They had also identified audits to address high-risk, cross-cutting issues (thematic audits) for 2018/19, including topical and recurring themes. Some of the topical thematic audits identified included the implementation of an environmental action plan; a gender affairs programme and gender mainstreaming; and time and attendance.

Included in the recurring themes were areas such as fuel, procurement/contract management, assets management and movement control operations.

21. As a result of that analysis, OIOS informed the Committee that there was a capacity gap of 255 audit days in the Division. To address this gap, and given, inter alia, the changes in missions' mandates and the working environment, the Committee was informed that the Division was proposing several changes including: the reclassification of one P-5 post as a D-1 post; an additional two P-4 posts for UNMISS and the Information Communications and Technology Section; the conversion of 10 general temporary assistance positions to regular posts; and a reduction of five posts in missions which were either under liquidation or have been downsized. According to OIOS, the impact of the above adjustments would be a net reduction of three posts in the Division, from 90 to 87.

22. **In the light of the above, and cognizant of the Secretary-General's ongoing reform initiatives, including the global service delivery model, which will have an impact, inter alia, on the operations of the service centre arrangements and hence the work of OIOS, the Committee endorses the resource requirement for the Division as proposed by the Controller.**

B. Inspection and Evaluation Division

Workplan implementation

23. In paragraph 24 of its report on the proposed budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 (A/67/772), the Committee recommended that, in order for the Inspection and Evaluation Division to ensure its relevance to decision makers, it should, inter alia, finalize its reports in a timely manner. During the deliberations, the Committee was informed that two items scheduled for evaluation during the 2014/15 fiscal year, together with other outstanding deliverables from prior years, were completed during the 2016/17 fiscal year. The Division also informed the Committee that it planned to complete three 2017/18 assignments during the current period, which would result in a total of six completions during the fiscal year.

24. **The Committee welcomes the effort that the Inspection and Evaluation Division has put into completing outstanding assignments. To add value to its work, the Committee calls upon the Division to sustain its effort to complete workplans on time.**

Risk-based planning

25. As was the case with previous budgets, the Inspection and Evaluation Division informed the Committee that the 2018/19 evaluation workplan for peacekeeping activities was developed using a risk-based approach with, as its starting point, the results of the previous (2017/18) risk assessment, as well as in consideration of the six critical risks identified in the Secretariat-wide enterprise risk management framework and the peacekeeping operations' high-level priorities for 2018.

26. The Inspection and Evaluation Division further informed the Committee that its risk assessment was specifically influenced by two major reform initiatives of the Secretary-General, namely: (a) the restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar, as set out in the report of the Secretary-General on the restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar (A/72/525); and (b) the changes outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: ensuring a better future for all (A/72/492). According to the

Inspection and Evaluation Division, other factors also influenced its assessment, including: the Internal Audit Division risk assessment; the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/71/19); select resolutions and presidential statements of the Security Council; the Secretary-General's progress reports on peacekeeping; and issues/topics presented to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support evaluation advisory board by the Division for Policy, Evaluation and Training.

27. In paragraph 19 of its report on the proposed budget of the Office of Internal Oversight Services under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/70/759), the Committee expressed its concern that there was no demonstrated link between the six critical risks of the Organization and the risk assessment conducted by the Inspection and Evaluation Division. During this period, the Committee followed up with the Division and was informed that, of the six critical risks of the Organization, two were considered relevant to the evaluation work of the Division. These were organization structure and synchronization and organizational transformation.

28. **As was the case with the Internal Audit Division, the Committee continues to commend OIOS for the effort made to show how Inspection and Evaluation Division workplans are guided by the Organization's critical enterprise risk strategy.**

Capacity gap analysis and budget proposal

29. The Committee was informed that, although the Inspection and Evaluation Division needs to conduct 14 evaluations per year on the basis of the above assessment, it will be able to deliver only 3 large evaluations and 2 medium-sized/smaller scoped evaluations/inspections/triennial reviews in a year with its current level of resources of seven staff. According to OIOS, the implication of this gap is that peacekeeping evaluations are conducted by a single evaluator, without evaluation staff support and relying on temporary consultancy support to carry out tasks better suited to evaluation staff.

30. That gap notwithstanding, the Committee was informed that, considering the current financial environment and given the recent approval of three new staff positions during last year's budget process, the Inspection and Evaluation Division was not requesting any new resources in the 2018/19 budget submission. The budget proposal, however, includes a request for an increase in the Division's official travel resources, to allow for travel to peacekeeping missions for data collection.

31. Accordingly, shown in the annex is the Inspection and Evaluation Division's proposed workplan for 2018/19 and indicative workplans for 2019/20 and 2020/21.

32. **The Committee has noted the decision of the Inspection and Evaluation Division not to request additional resources for the evaluation of the peacekeeping activities, except for travel. In view of the Secretary-General's ongoing reform initiatives, the Committee supports the decision of the Division not to seek additional resources at the present time.**

C. Investigations Division

33. In reviewing the support account budget of the Investigations Division, the Committee continued to be cognizant of the challenges that have plagued the Division, especially with regard to the operations, internal working relationships and effectiveness of the Division. The Committee was also mindful of the Secretary-

General's reform proposals, which, inter alia, reiterated the Committee's earlier call for a review of OIOS — especially the investigation function.

34. During the assessment of the budget of the Investigations Division, the Committee was informed that the Division's workplan was designed to address two strategic objectives of the Division, namely:

(a) To build a harmonious workplace in which individual staff members can thrive in an atmosphere conducive to individual development and personal success as part of a diverse and high-performing team;

(b) To continuously improve both the capacity and capability of the Investigations Division to investigate and improve the quality and timeliness of its investigations.

Workplan implementation

35. The Investigations Division reported that, to address the above objectives, the 2018–19 workplan focused on people, investigations and the future. With respect to people, in paragraph 8 of its report entitled "Internal oversight: proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017" (A/70/86), the Committee, inter alia, called upon OIOS to devise a strategy for addressing its enduring vacancy problems.

36. During the review process, the Committee was informed, at its fortieth session in December, that in addressing the people "risk", a large-scale recruitment exercise was under way which would result in the reduction of the vacancy rate from the current 25 per cent to between 5 per cent and 7 per cent by the end of January 2018. The Investigations Division informed the Committee that, to achieve this, it was looking at: a centralized recruitment process; a professionalized induction process; and improved diversity in terms of gender, geographical distribution and professional background. The Investigations Division further noted that it had embarked on several staff retention programmes by looking at factors that had adversely impacted retention, such as a lack of career advancement opportunities, a history of conflict in the Division and lack of mobility.

37. At its forty-first session, the Committee followed up on the vacancy status of the Investigations Division and was informed that contracts had been issued for 11 vacancies and that all the selected candidates were at the onboarding stage. According to the Division, if this process is successfully completed, the vacancy rate in the Division will fall to 7 per cent.

38. **Despite the protracted recruitment process of the Organization, a challenge highlighted in the Secretary-General's reform proposal, the Committee remains cautiously optimistic that the current onboarding process will be successful. The Committee commends the Investigations Division for the effort it has put into this endeavour and calls upon the Division to keep up the momentum until its vacancy rate is brought to the optimal level.**

39. With regard to the delays in the disposition of investigation cases, the Committee was informed that the average time to complete an investigation had fallen from a high of 23 months in 2011 to 12 months in 2017. According to OIOS, the fall in average time has also been matched with a decrease in the average age of cases from a high of 17 months in 2012 to 7.3 as at 30 November 2017. In this regard, OIOS believes that it is on the right track for achieving the targeted six months for the completion of its investigations. **The Committee continues to welcome these developments and encourages OIOS to maintain that effort so as to achieve the target range.**

40. With respect to management of the investigation process, the Committee was informed that, of the cases reported to the Investigations Division during the past five years, 15–35 per cent are accepted for investigation and that the average number of open investigations over the same period was 146. Of the remainder, an average of 48 per cent were referred to other entities and the others were closed.

41. With regard to the establishment of a forensic unit, the Committee, in its previous reports, had long advocated a robust forensic and proactive investigation unit. During the session, the Committee was informed that there were three Digital Forensic Investigators forming three separate digital forensic units, based in New York, Vienna and Nairobi, and that they represented a key investigative tool and were valuable resources, far outweighing the resourcing of any comparable United Nations investigations unit. However, according to the Investigations Division, their current use, organization, equipping and reporting lines are far from satisfactory and need to be reviewed and improved, with their use mainstreamed.

42. **The Committee plans to review this matter, together with the referrals described in paragraph 43, in its subsequent sessions.**

Workplan and resource requirement

43. With respect to the workplan of the Investigations Division and resource requirement, the Committee was informed that the Division's request was driven by the need to address the following major areas, namely: capacity-building to address sexual exploitation and abuse; increased focus on investigation of fraud and corruption; establishment of a central intake system; and the investigation of retaliation cases.

44. With regard to the sexual exploitation and abuse cases, the Investigations Division informed the Committee that, in the light of the report of an independent review on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic (A/71/99), and the emphasis of the Secretary-General on combating sexual exploitation and abuse, addressing such cases had become a main priority, leading to the virtual exclusion of many other activities. According to the Division, 25 per cent of its workload is on sexual exploitation and abuse cases, concentrated predominantly in peacekeeping missions. The Division also informed the Committee that it was working with the Special Coordinator of the Secretary-General on improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, together with the Conduct and Discipline Unit and conduct and discipline teams, the immediate response teams and the national investigation officers, on behalf of the troop-contributing countries.

45. According to the Investigations Division, continuing comments by oversight bodies regarding the underreporting of fraud and the recent publication of the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Framework of the United Nations Secretariat, together with the determination of the Under-Secretary-Generals of both OIOS and the Department of Field Support to refocus on fraud and corruption, has created an imperative for the Division to direct its efforts in that direction. According to the Division, fraud and corruption made up 35 per cent (52 cases out of 150) of all cases under investigation.

46. While acknowledging the importance of a central intake system that includes the ability to review, allocate, analyse, proactively react to trends and track progress, the Investigations Division informed the Committee that expansion of the intake process beyond this will create resource issues and detract from the Division's core function of investigation. Upon further follow-up, the Committee was informed that OIOS had assumed responsibility for the central intake mechanism for all

investigations, in accordance with the administrative instruction on unsatisfactory conduct, investigations and the disciplinary process (ST/AI/2017/1).

47. With respect to retaliation, the Investigations Division informed the Committee that, following the issuance of the revised Secretary General's bulletin on protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations (ST/SGB/2017/2), the retaliation caseload had increased by 400 per cent, which, given the prescribed time limits and the nature of the investigations themselves, was having an adverse effect on the Division's ability to investigate other priority cases.

48. In this regard, OIOS requested: the conversion of 18 general temporary assistance positions to posts, the creation of one General Service (Other level) post and the redeployment of one post; the upward reclassification of one post; the reassignment of three posts from the Internal Audit Division to the Investigations Division; and the abolishment of one P-5 post. Upon follow-up, the Committee was informed that the Controller supported the budget proposal of the Investigations Division as requested, except for the upward reclassification of one post and the conversion of some general temporary assistance positions.

49. With respect to the creation of new posts, the Committee has consistently noted that it was not in a position to support such an option, owing to the high vacancy rates in the Investigations Division. The Committee was however informed that the General Service (Other level) post was needed to enable the Division to effectively manage the hotline (which is part of the central intake mechanism). According to OIOS, this hotline (which could be handled at the General Service level) is currently being handled by investigators on a weekly rotational basis. The implication is that for one week the valuable time of an investigator is spent on receiving cases and populating the system, thus diverting the investigators from their core functions.

50. **In this regard, after seeking further clarifications from the Controller and OIOS, and noting the continued effort the Investigations Division is putting into addressing its vacancy situation, the Committee believes that OIOS has made a compelling case for the need for a G-6 post to administer the hotline. This is even more important, given the increased awareness and focus on the reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption cases and those cases associated with prohibited conduct.**

51. **Therefore, the Committee endorses the resource levels as presented by the Controller.**

Subsequent event

52. After finalizing its deliberations with regard to its report on the support account budget of OIOS, the Committee was informed of additional resource requirements that OIOS had submitted to the Controller in response to the Secretary-General's renewed commitment to fighting sexual harassment. To address that initiative, the Committee was informed that the Investigations Division would require six additional investigators (two P-4 and four P-3), evenly distributed between New York and Nairobi. According to OIOS, the Investigations Division will be responsible for investigating all complaints of sexual harassment and for implementing a streamlined procedure to receive, process and address complaints.

53. **Consistent with the Committee's recommendations in paragraphs 50 and 51, the Committee supports the request for the six additional posts to support the Secretary-General's initiative.**

IV. Conclusion

54. The members of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee respectfully submit the present report, containing its comments and recommendations for consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Maria Gracia M. **Pulido Tan**
Chair, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(*Signed*) Patricia X. **Arriagada Villouta**
Vice-Chair, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(*Signed*) Natalia A. **Bocharova**
Member, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(*Signed*) Richard Quartei **Quartey**
Member, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

(*Signed*) Janet **St. Laurent**
Member, Independent Audit Advisory Committee

Annex

Inspection and Evaluation Division proposed workplan for 2018/19 and indicative workplan for 2019/20 and 2020/21

Enterprise risk management critical risks	*2018/19*	*2019/20 (indicative)*	*2020/21 (indicative)*
Organizational structure and synchronization	United Nations support to Member States for the training of peacekeeping troops Expected completion: June 2019	Development of peacekeeping policy and doctrine	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programmes
Strategic planning and budget allocation and Human Resources strategy and management	African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur Expected completion: June 2019	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
Organizational structure and synchronization	Working culture in peacekeeping operations and its impact on effectiveness in mandate implementation Expected completion: June 2019	Political outreach and conflict prevention by peacekeeping missions	Environmental management in peacekeeping missions
Organizational transformation	Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations in the 2015 OIOS report on the evaluation of the enforcement and remedial assistance efforts for sexual exploitation and abuse by the United Nations and related personnel in peacekeeping operations Expected completion: December 2018	Inspection of a topic to be decided, related to management, administrative and operational support for peacekeeping missions	Emergency preparedness and crisis management
Strategic planning and budget allocation and Human Resources strategy and management	Inspection of boards of inquiry and claims compensation mechanisms in selected peacekeeping missions Expected completion: June 2019	Triennial review of the implementation of recommendations in the 2015 OIOS report on the evaluation of the senior leadership training of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support	Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations in previous OIOS evaluation reports

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Human resources management

Mobility

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/265 and is a continuation of reports submitted by the Secretary-General to the Assembly since the sixty-ninth session. It provides an update on the progress made towards the implementation of the mobility and career development framework. The next report to the seventy-third session will contain the comprehensive review of the framework, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 68/265.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 68/265, approved the refined managed mobility and career development framework and requested annual reports on mobility until the seventy-second session. The present report is the fourth such report and provides an update on the implementation of the Political, Peace and Humanitarian Network (POLNET) in 2016 and 2017 and an overview of the launch of the Information and Telecommunication Technology Network (ITECNET) in 2017. It also contains information on mobility trends, mobility costs, external recruitment and key performance indicators.

2. The mobility and career development framework, now renamed the staff selection and managed mobility system (new system), has the following three main objectives: (a) to enable the Organization to better retain and deploy a global, dynamic, adaptable and engaged workforce which can effectively meet current and future mandates and evolving operational needs; (b) to provide staff members with broader opportunities to pursue career development and contribute to the Organization and enable staff members to further acquire new skills, knowledge and experience within and across departments, functions and duty stations; and (c) to ensure that staff members have equal opportunities for service across the United Nations and that, for relevant functions, there is a fair sharing of the burden of service in difficult duty stations.

3. The new system consists of two parts:

(a) Managed mobility: an internal process for the lateral movement of staff members, in which serving staff members express interest in encumbered positions. Staff members participating in the process are those who have reached either their maximum position occupancy limit[1] in the second year of network implementation or their minimum position occupancy limit[2] for those who choose to opt in;

(b) Filling of vacancies: the advertisement of existing and anticipated vacant positions, open to all candidates (external and internal) for selection.

4. The first job network, POLNET, was launched in 2016. The second job network, ITECNET, was implemented in 2017.

II. Update on the implementation of the new staff selection and managed mobility system for the Political, Peace and Humanitarian Network

A. Managed mobility

Opt-in managed mobility exercise in 2016

5. In the first year of the operationalization of POLNET, the managed mobility exercise was "opt-in" and therefore staff members who had reached their maximum

[1] The maximum period of time a staff member is normally allowed to serve in a rotational position. The maximum position occupancy limit is seven years for duty stations classified H and A, four years for duty stations classified B and C and three years for duty stations classified D and E. Duty station classification is established by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).

[2] The minimum period of time a staff member is normally required to serve in a rotational position before being able to participate in a managed mobility exercise or apply to a vacant position. The minimum position occupancy limit is two years of continuous service in a position in duty stations classified H, A, B and C, and one year of continuous service in duty stations classified D and E. Duty station classification is established by ICSC.

position occupancy limit were not automatically subject to lateral reassignment. In the two managed mobility exercises that took place in 2016, 601 staff members opted in and 188 were deemed eligible to participate. Of those, 33 staff members (18 per cent) were from non-hardship duty stations and 155 (82 per cent) were from hardship duty stations; there were a total of 53 female staff members (28 per cent) and 135 male staff members (72 per cent), as set out in table 1.

Table 1
Opt-in managed mobility participants in POLNET by classification of duty station and gender, 2016

	Participants			
Classification of duty station	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Non-hardship	13	20	33	18
Hardship	40	115	155	82
Total	**53 (28%)**	**135 (72%)**	**188 (100%)**	

6. Of the 188 eligible staff members in 2016, 60 (32 per cent) were recommended for placement. In terms of burden-sharing, most of the participants (85 per cent) were from hardship duty stations, and 6 staff members (10 per cent) were recommended for placement from hardship to non-hardship duty stations while 6 staff members (10 per cent) were recommended for placement from non-hardship to hardship duty stations.

7. It is of interest to note that not all staff members from hardship duty stations expressed interest in moving to non-hardship duty stations: among the 155 participants from hardship duty stations, 37 staff members (24 per cent) expressed interest only in other hardship (D and E) duty stations.

8. Of those recommended for placement, 32 per cent were women, which increased the representation of the 28 per cent of female staff members who participated in the process (see table 2). Of the 60 staff members recommended for placement as a result of the exercise in 2016, 90 per cent were recommended to positions in which they expressed interest.

Table 2
Opt-in managed mobility placements in POLNET by classification of duty station and gender, 2016

	Placements			
Movement	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Hardship duty station to hardship duty station	15	30	45	75
Hardship duty station to non-hardship duty station	2	4	6	10
Non-hardship duty station to hardship duty station	1	5	6	10
Non-hardship duty station to non-hardship duty station	1	2	3	5
Total	**19 (32%)**	**41 (68%)**	**60 (100%)**	

9. There were a number of reasons why not all the participants could be placed. Staff members provided a list of positions in which they were interested, but that list did not always include positions for which they were also suitable. Programme managers also provided their preferences, which did not always match the interests of participating staff members. The Job Network Board considered several factors when making placement recommendations, including the findings of the Special Constraints Panel and the preferences of both programme managers and staff members.

10. Of the 60 placements, 25 staff members were not able to move to their new positions for a variety of reasons, including visa issues, the downsizing of missions after the start of the exercise and funding issues. In order for a staff member to be able to participate, the funding of their position had to be guaranteed for two years. As most of the positions in POLNET are funded annually, that requirement was extremely difficult for many field offices to meet. As a result, only 35 of the 60 staff members moved. Of those 35, 33 were geographic moves.

Mandatory managed mobility exercise in 2017

11. In 2017, the second year of the operationalization of POLNET, staff members who reached their maximum position occupancy limit were required to participate in managed mobility. The final compendium of position announcements for the 2017 managed mobility exercise consisted of 113 participating positions: 83 from the mandatory population and 30 eligible opt-ins; 31 were women (27 per cent) and 82 were men (73 per cent); and 44 were from non-hardship duty stations (39 per cent) and 69 were from hardship duty stations (61 per cent) (see table 3). Of the eligible group (107 staff and 113 positions),[3] 34 staff members (32 per cent) were recommended for placement (see table 4).

Table 3
Mandatory managed mobility participants in POLNET by classification of duty station and gender, 2017

	Participants			
Classification of duty station	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Non-hardship	15	29	44	39
Hardship	16	53	69	61
Total	**31 (27%)**	**82 (73%)**	**113 (100%)**	

Table 4
Mandatory managed mobility placements in POLNET by classification of duty station and gender, 2017

	Placements			
Movement	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Hardship duty station to hardship duty station	5	14	19	56
Hardship duty station to non-hardship duty station	1	2	3	9

[3] Six more staff members originally participated in the exercise, but subsequently vacated their positions (through selections or separations).

Movement	Placements			
	Female	Male	Total	Percentage
Non-hardship duty station to hardship duty station	0	2	2	6
Non-hardship duty station to non-hardship duty station	5	5	10	29
Total	**11 (32%)**	**23 (68%)**	**34(100%)**	

B. Filling of vacancies

Vacancy exercises in 2016 and 2017

12. There were 463 job openings (for a total of 530 positions) in the POLNET vacancy exercises for 2016 and 2017.[4] Among those, there were a total of 269 "recruit from roster" job openings (for 312 positions) and 194 position-specific job openings (for 218 positions).

13. Table 5 provides the distribution of the 369 completed job openings (representing 418 selections) by job family in POLNET as at 31 December 2017. The remaining 94 job openings are at various stages of being filled.

Table 5
Completed job openings in vacancy exercises in POLNET by job family as at 31 December 2017

Job family	Number of job openings	Percentage
Political affairs	185	50
Human rights affairs	92	26
Rule of law	26	6
Civil affairs	20	6
Security institutions	18	5
Humanitarian affairs	16	4
Electoral affairs	12	3
Total	**369**	**100**

14. A notable achievement in the consideration of organizational priorities by the Job Network Board and the Senior Review Board in their selection recommendations can be seen in the gender parity data. Of the 418 completed selections as at 31 December 2017, there was a higher proportion of women (57 per cent) than men (43 per cent) (see table 6).

[4] Some job openings are for multiple positions, so the number of positions and selections is greater than the number of job openings.

Table 6
Vacancy selections in POLNET by gender and grade level as at 31 December 2017

	Female		*Male*		
Category grade	*Number of selections*	*Percentage of grade*	*Number of selections*	*Percentage of grade*	*Total number of selections*
D-2	4	80	1	20	5
D-1	5	50	5	50	10
P-5	37	53	33	47	70
P-4	81	58	59	42	140
P-3	96	55	78	45	174
P-2	15	79	4	21	19
Total	**238**	**57**	**180**	**43**	**418**

15. The objective of ensuring a fair sharing of the burden of service in hardship duty stations is relevant only for serving staff, not external recruitments.[5] As the data in table 7 illustrate, 18 per cent of staff selections from hardship duty stations were movements to non-hardship duty stations, and 46 per cent of staff selections from non-hardship duty stations were movements to hardship duty stations. In other words, 34 per cent (90 of 266) of the staff selections resulted in a shift from hardship to non-hardship or vice versa.

Table 7
Burden-sharing between hardship and non-hardship duty stations through vacancy exercises in POLNET as at 31 December 2017

	Selection to hardship duty station		*Selection to non-hardship duty station*		
Duty station	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Total number*
Non-hardship	69	46	81	54	150
Hardship	95	82	21	18	116
Total	**164**	**62**	**102**	**38**	**266**

C. Surge, start-up or humanitarian emergencies

16. In order to ensure effective mandate implementation under the peace and security, development and human rights pillars, POLNET departments and offices were able to recruit outside the semi-annual staffing exercises in order to meet critical operational needs due to surge, start-up or humanitarian emergencies. The majority of exceptions related to surge requirements (see table 8).

[5] The selections presented in table 7 reflect selections for candidates who have internal Inspira accounts.

Table 8
POLNET job openings approved for posting outside the new system

Reason for recruitment	*Positions*
Surge	45
Start-up	30
Humanitarian emergencies	4
Total	**79**

III. Update on the implementation of the new staff selection and managed mobility system for the Information and Telecommunication Technology Network

A. Managed mobility

17. In the first year of the operationalization of ITECNET, the managed mobility exercise was conducted on an "opt-in" basis and therefore staff members who had reached their maximum position occupancy limit were not automatically subject to lateral reassignment. In the managed mobility exercise of 2017, 91 staff members opted in and 38 were deemed eligible to participate. One staff member was selected for a vacancy and withdrew. Of the remaining 37 participants, 46 per cent were from non-hardship duty stations and 54 per cent were from hardship duty stations, and 16 per cent (six) were women and 84 per cent (31) were men (see table 9).

Table 9
Opt-in managed mobility participants in ITECNET by classification of duty station and gender, 2017

	Participants			
Classification of duty station	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Non-hardship	3	14	17	46
Hardship	3	17	20	54
Total	**6 (16%)**	**31 (84%)**	**37 (100%)**	

18. Of the 37 participants, 18 staff members (49 per cent) were recommended for placement. All staff members were recommended for positions for which they expressed interest. With regard to burden-sharing, two staff members (11 per cent) were recommended for placement from hardship to non-hardship duty stations and two staff members (11 per cent) were recommended for placement from non-hardship to hardship duty stations. Of those recommended for placement, 22 per cent were women (see table 10). It should be noted that the female placement rate of 22 per cent is an increase from the female participation rate of 16 per cent.

Table 10
Opt-in managed mobility placements in ITECNET by classification of duty station and gender, 2017

Movement	*Placements*			
	Female	*Male*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Hardship duty station to hardship duty station	2	7	9	50
Hardship duty station to non-hardship duty station	0	2	2	11
Non-hardship duty station to hardship duty station	0	2	2	11
Non-hardship duty station to non-hardship duty station	2	3	5	28
Total	**4 (22%)**	**14 (78%)**	**18 (100%)**	

B. Filling of vacancies

19. In the ITECNET vacancy exercise for 2017, there were a total of 11 job openings (for 11 positions). All 11 were in the job family of Information Management Systems and Technology. Among those, five were "recruit from roster" job openings and six were position-specific job openings. Four of the job openings were located at Headquarters duty stations (New York, Geneva and Vienna) and seven were in field duty stations; eight were job openings in the Professional category and three were in the Field Service category. All job openings were completed as at 31 December 2017, and totalled five female and six male selections (see table 11).

Table 11
Vacancy selections in ITECNET by gender and grade level as at 31 December 2017

Category grade	*Female*		*Male*		*Total number of selections*
	Number of selections	*Percentage of grade*	*Number of selections*	*Percentage of grade*	
P-5	0	0	2	100	2
P-4	0	0	2	100	2
P-3	0	0	1	100	1
P-2	3	100	0	0	3
FS-7	1	100	0	0	1
FS-6	1	50	1	50	2
Total	**5**	**45**	**6**	**55**	**11**

20. The objective of ensuring a fair sharing of the burden of service in hardship duty stations pertains to serving staff, not external recruitment.[6] As the data in table 12 illustrate, 33 per cent of staff selections from hardship duty stations were movements to non-hardship duty stations and 33 per cent of staff selections from non-hardship duty stations were movements to hardship duty stations. In other words, 33 per cent (3 of 9) of the staff selections resulted in a move from hardship to non-hardship duty stations or vice versa.

[6] The selections presented in table 12 reflect selections for candidates with internal Inspira accounts.

Table 12
Burden-sharing between hardship and non-hardship duty stations through vacancy exercises in ITECNET as at 31 December 2017

	Selection to hardship duty station		*Selection to non-hardship duty station*		
Duty station	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Total*
Non-hardship	2	33	4	67	6
Hardship	2	67	1	33	3
Total	**4**	**44**	**5**	**56**	**9**

C. Surge, start-up or humanitarian emergencies

21. There were a total of four exceptions granted to the Umoja enterprise resource planning project to post vacancies outside the semi-annual exercise for positions. In addition, the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) was allowed to advertise its vacancies outside the new system in order to meet staffing requirements resulting from its start-up (see table 13).

Table 13
ITECNET job openings approved for posting outside the new system

Reason for recruitment	*Positions*
Surge	4
Start-up	1
Total	**5**

IV. Mobility trends

22. The present section provides updated information on current mobility trends for staff members in the Professional, Director and Field Service categories with fixed-term, continuing and permanent contracts. In total, there were 12,329 staff members in the nine job networks in the Secretariat as at 31 December 2017.[7]

A. Distribution of the mobility population as at 31 December 2017

23. Table 14 presents the mobility population by job network.

[7] The figure includes staff members at the Professional, Director and Field Service levels with fixed-term, continuing and permanent appointments. Staff members administered by the United Nations Development Programme and staff members of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals are excluded.

Table 14
Distribution of mobility population by job network as at 31 December 2017

Job network	*Number of staff members*	*Percentage of mobility population*
MAGNET	2 285	19
POLNET	2 199	18
DEVNET	2 107	17
LOGNET	1 735	14
INFONET	1 515	12
SAFETYNET	1 160	9
ITECNET	945	8
LEGALNET	270	2
SCINET	113	1
Total	**12 329**	**100**

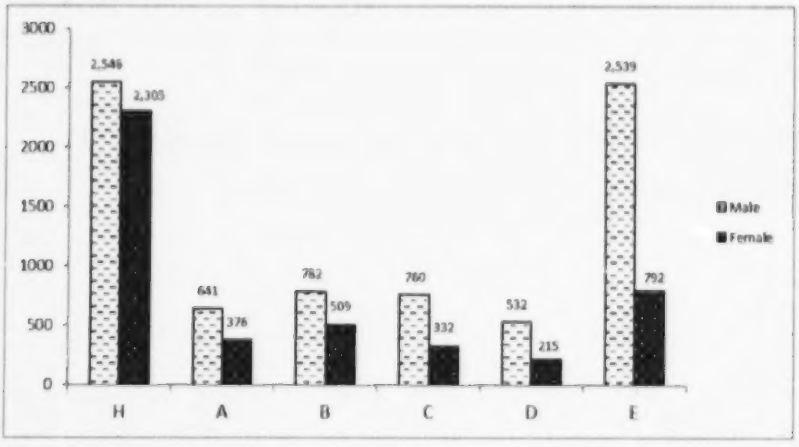
Abbreviations: DEVNET: Economic, Social and Development Network; INFONET: Public Information and Conference Management Network; ITECNET: Information and Telecommunication Technology Network; LEGALNET: Legal Network; LOGNET: Logistics, Transportation and Supply Chain Network; MAGNET: Management and Administration Network; POLNET: Political, Peace and Humanitarian Network; SAFETYNET: Internal Security and Safety Network; SCINET: Science Network.

B. Mobility trends of staff members

24. Figure I illustrates the distribution of staff members in the mobility population as at 31 December 2017, by gender and duty station classification.[8]

Figure I
Mobility population as at 31 December 2017, by duty station classification and gender

(Population: 12,329)

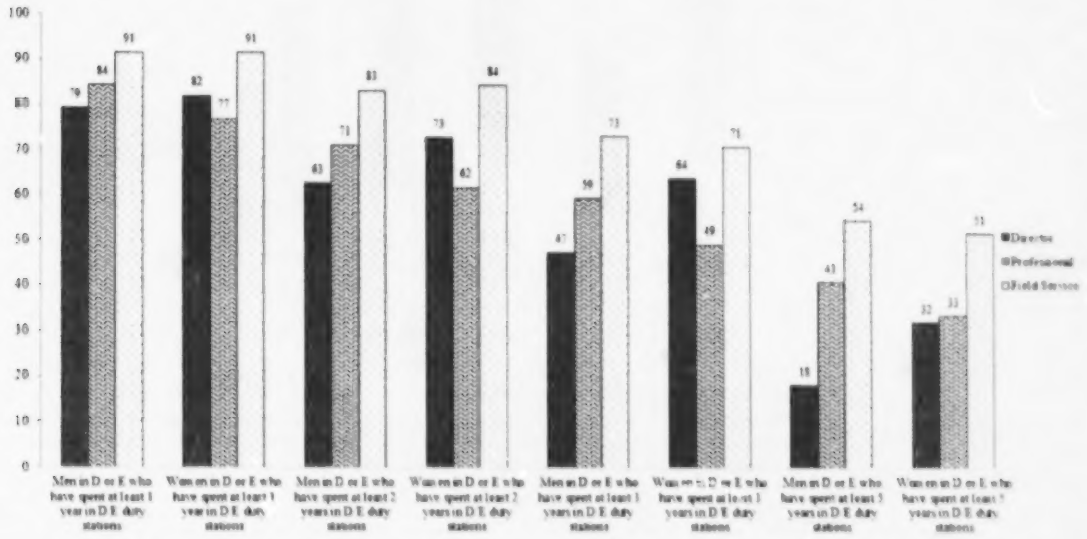


[8] ICSC has placed all duty stations in one of six categories: H, A, B, C, D and E. H duty stations are headquarters and similarly designated locations at which the United Nations has no development or humanitarian assistance programmes, or locations in States members of the European Union. A to E duty stations are field duty stations. Field duty stations are rated on a scale of difficulty from A to E, with A being the least difficult.

25. Figure II displays the percentage of staff members[9] as at 31 December 2017 who spent more than one, two, three or five years in duty stations in the D and/or E category. The figure shows that both male and female staff members tend to remain in hardship duty stations for relatively equal periods of time.

Figure II

Percentage of staff members who have spent more than one, two, three or five years in D and/or E category duty stations as at 31 December 2017, by gender



Note: Following the implementation of Umoja, the approach for these calculations has been aligned with the manner in which continuous service is defined for other human resources purposes.

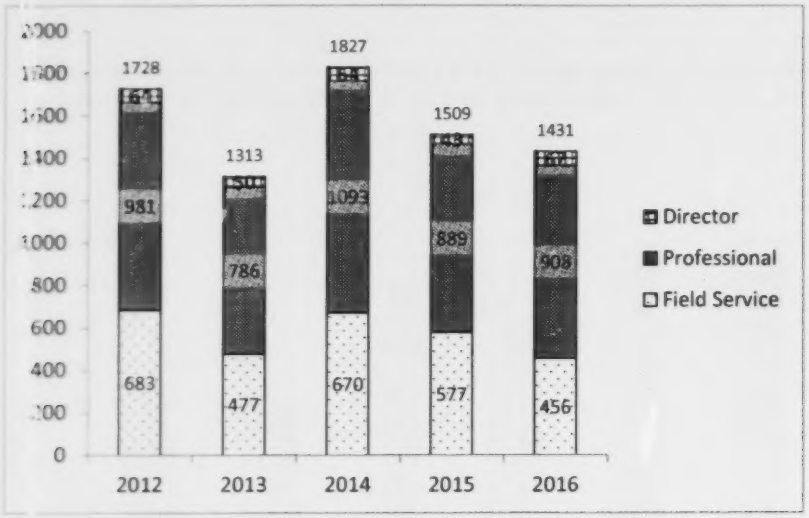
C. Data on geographic moves

26. Figure III displays the number of geographic moves, by category, of one year or longer for the period from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016. A geographic move is recorded during the year in which the move is initiated, and is confirmed as such only after the staff member remains at that duty station for a full year. During the past five years, internationally recruited staff members made an average of 1,562 geographic moves. Figure IV reflects the number of geographic moves of one year or longer for the period of 2012–2016 for staff members in POLNET and figure V reflects the same for ITECNET.

[9] Mobility population staff in D or E duty station category positions who have been continuously in regular assignments at the Director, Profession or Field Service categories in duty stations categorized D or E.

Figure III

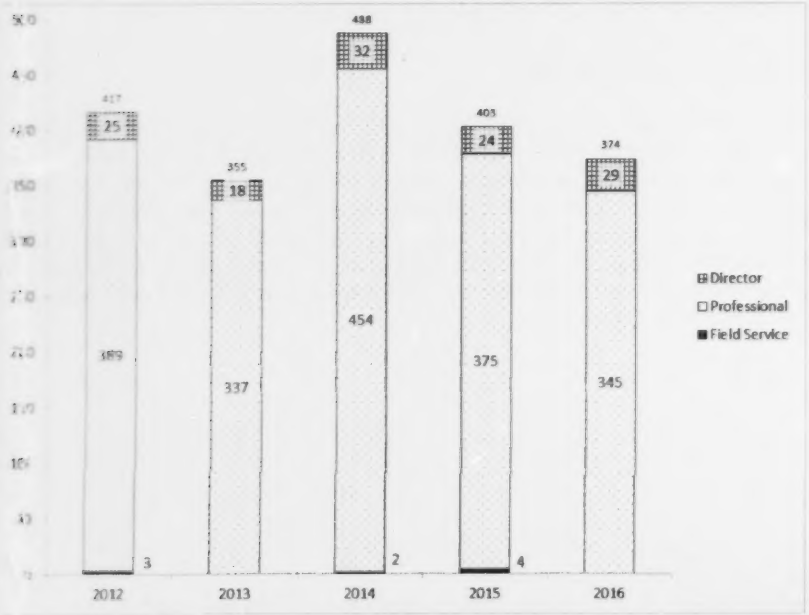
Number of geographic moves by staff members in the Director, Professional and Field Service categories, 2012–2016



Note: Until 2013, geographic moves reflected change of country only; from 2014, the movements include all geographic moves. For example, starting in 2014, if a staff member moved from Gao, Mali, to Bamako, Mali, for longer than a year, that move would count as a geographic move; before 2014, that would not have counted as a geographic move.

Figure IV

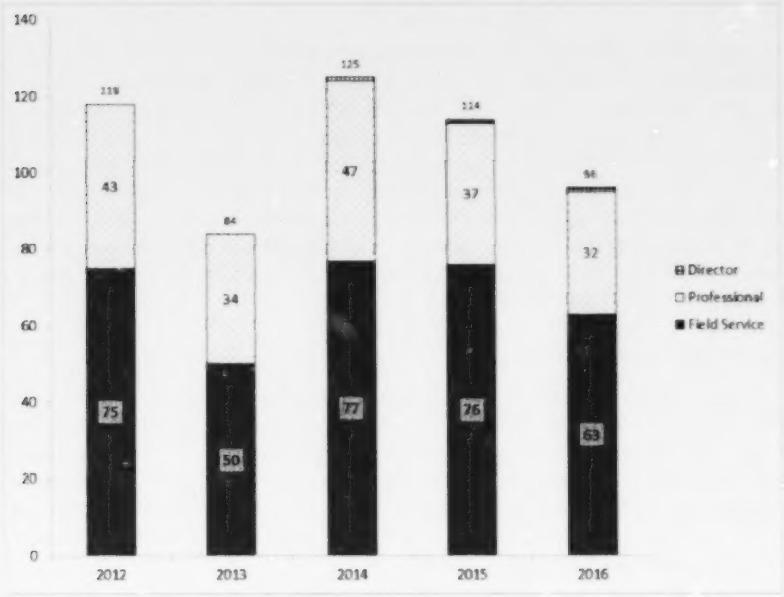
Number of geographic moves by staff members in POLNET in the Director, Professional and Field Service categories, 2012–2016



Note: Until 2013, geographic moves reflected change of country only; from 2014, movements include all geographic moves.

27. In its resolution 68/265, the General Assembly decided that the number of geographic moves for job networks in 2016 and 2017 should not be greater than the average number of geographic moves in those networks in 2014 and 2015. For POLNET, the average number of geographic moves in 2014 and 2015 was 446 (488 in 2014 and 403 in 2015). That number was used as the limit for the average number of moves in 2016 and 2017 in POLNET. As shown in figure IV, the number of geographic moves for POLNET in 2016 did not exceed the limit set. The number of geographic moves for 2017 cannot yet be confirmed, as long-term geographical movements are calculated after the staff member has remained in the duty station for at least one year.

Figure V
Number of geographic moves by staff members in ITECNET in the Director, Professional and Field Service categories, 2012–2016



28. For ITECNET, the average number of geographic moves in 2015 and 2016 was 105 (114 in 2015 and 96 in 2016). That number was used as the limit for the average number of moves in 2017. As indicated in paragraph 27, the geographic moves initiated in 2017 cannot yet be confirmed, as long-term geographical movements can only be calculated after the staff member has remained in the duty station for at least one year. Current data indicate that the limit will not be exceeded for ITECNET for 2017, as the number of staff members recommended for placement in the managed mobility exercise and the total number of positions advertised in the vacancy exercise were significantly lower.

V. Direct and indirect costs of mobility

29. Direct costs of mobility, including recurrent and one-time costs, arise only when staff members change duty stations. The recurrent costs include the non-removal element and the mobility allowance (for a staff member making his or her second move). The one-time costs include relocation grant, assignment grant and travel costs. The actual level of payment varies depending on such factors as the category and

level of the staff member, the size of his or her family, the category and designation of the duty station to which he or she is moving, the duration of the reassignment and the number of previous reassignments undertaken. It is therefore possible that costs will fluctuate from year to year.

30. To provide information on the direct costs of geographic moves, the Secretariat has analysed geographic moves made in the calendar years 2011 to 2015 and the associated payments to derive average direct costs per person per move. The present report provides data for 2015, when 1,509 geographic moves were made by internationally recruited staff members (see figure III above), and a summary of the average direct costs for the period 2011–2012 and for the years 2013, 2014, and 2015 (see table 16 below).

A. Direct costs

31. As indicated in paragraph 27, geographic moves cannot be ascertained until a full year has gone by. Therefore, the results of the geographic moves for 2016 have only just become available. Given that the cost analysis for geographic moves is a manual exercise based on the retrieval of cost information associated with the index numbers of staff members who have made such moves, there has not been time to conduct the analysis of geographic moves made in 2016 prior to the publication of the present report. Therefore, the present report includes the latest available analysis of the costs of the geographic moves made in 2015 (see table 15) and estimates costs for moves in 2016 based on the number of moves in 2016 multiplied by the average costs determined in 2015 (see table 17).

1. Recurrent costs for moves in 2015

32. The Secretariat analysed payroll data to identify recurrent cost payments made to staff members who moved in 2015. In that year, payments were made to 1,509 staff members, 354 of whom moved between non-field entities and 1,155 of whom moved to or from field entities.[10] It should be noted that, owing to the eligibility rules of the mobility allowance, which require that staff members have at least five years of prior consecutive service, some staff members will not begin to receive the allowance resulting from a move in 2015 until a future year.

33. The payments to the 1,509 staff members totalled $10,825,024, of which $1,905,783 was paid to staff members who made a geographic move between non-field entities, while $8,919,241 was paid to staff members who moved to or from field entities (which includes peacekeeping missions and special political missions). The average recurrent costs paid out to each staff member equalled $7,174.

2. One-time costs for moves in 2015

34. Data were also consolidated from the Integrated Information Management System (IMIS) and Umoja travel ledgers for the total one-time costs associated with geographic moves between non-field entities made in 2015. In that year, 354 staff members made a geographic move between non-field entities and one-time costs were identified in connection with 324 of them. A total of $11,219,321 was spent in connection with one-time costs for moves in 2015. The average one-time costs incurred for each of those staff members equalled $34,628.

35. The one-time costs for geographic moves to or from field entities continued to be captured using a combination of data sources, including IMIS and Umoja, in 2015. In that year, 1,155 staff members made a geographic move to or from 37 field entities

[10] See A/71/360, annex, table 1.B, for a list of field and non-field entities.

and one-time costs were identified in connection with 1,008 of them. A total of $19,957,621 was spent in connection with one-time costs for moves in 2015. The average one-time costs paid out to each of those staff members equalled $19,799.

3. Direct costs summary for 2015

36. On the basis of the data provided above, the direct costs associated with geographic moves in 2015 between non-field entities totalled $13.1 million, and the costs associated with moves to and from field entities totalled $28.9 million, for a total of $42.0 million. Given that some staff members who moved in 2015 were not paid the mobility allowance until after the year ended, and that it was not possible to identify all of the one-time costs for the moves to or from field entities, not all costs are reflected in the figures for 2015.

37. Table 15 summarizes the total direct costs for geographic moves in 2015 by movement. Table 16 provides a comparison of the average direct costs for 2011–2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Table 15
Summary of direct costs for geographic moves in 2015

(Millions of United States dollars)

	Recurrent cost	*One-time cost*	*Total*
Staff members who moved across departments or offices away from Headquarters, including the regional commissions (non-field entities)	1.9	11.2	13.1
Staff members who moved from or to field entities	8.9	20.0	28.9
Total	**10.8**	**31.2**	**42.0**

Table 16
Comparison of average direct costs per person per move, 2011-2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015

(United States dollars)

	2011-2012 (per year)	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*
Average one-time cost for staff members who moved across departments, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions (non-field entities)	48 870	43 745	39 788	34 628
Average one-time cost for staff members who moved from or to field entities	24 292	17 506	15 164	19 799
Average total recurrent cost for each staff member who moved	8 964	9 035	6 283	7 174

4. Direct costs for moves in 2016

38. Given that the geographic moves for 2016 could not be determined until the end of 2017, the full analysis exercise for actual costs for 2016 could not be completed prior to the publication of the present report. In 2016, 1,431 staff members made a geographic move: 396 moved between non-field entities and 1,035 moved to or from field entities. Table 17 reflects the number of moves in 2016 multiplied by the average costs determined in 2015.

Table 17
Estimated summary of direct costs for geographic moves in 2016
(Millions of United States dollars)

	Recurrent cost	*One-time cost*	*Total*
Staff members who moved across departments or offices away from Headquarters, including the regional commissions (non-field entities)	2.1	12.6	14.7
Staff members who moved from or to field entities	8.0	17.9	25.9
Total	**10.1**	**30.5**	**40.6**

B. Indirect costs

39. The indirect costs of administering the new system are related to the establishment of network staffing teams, which provided the full range of administrative support for the system as well as specialized expertise and technology.

40. The network staffing teams are dedicated, temporary full-time structures, responsible for providing substantive and administrative support for the implementation of the new system. The following temporary positions, funded through the redeployment of existing resources, were utilized to support the implementation of the new system in 2017 for Organization-wide functions across POLNET and ITECNET:

(a) 17 network staffing officers in the Professional category, 5 support staff members in the General Service category and 6 subject matter experts released from their substantive departments on a full-time basis;

(b) 5 temporary positions in the Examinations and Tests Section for developing and delivering assessments;

(c) 2 temporary positions in the Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Service for data management and reporting.

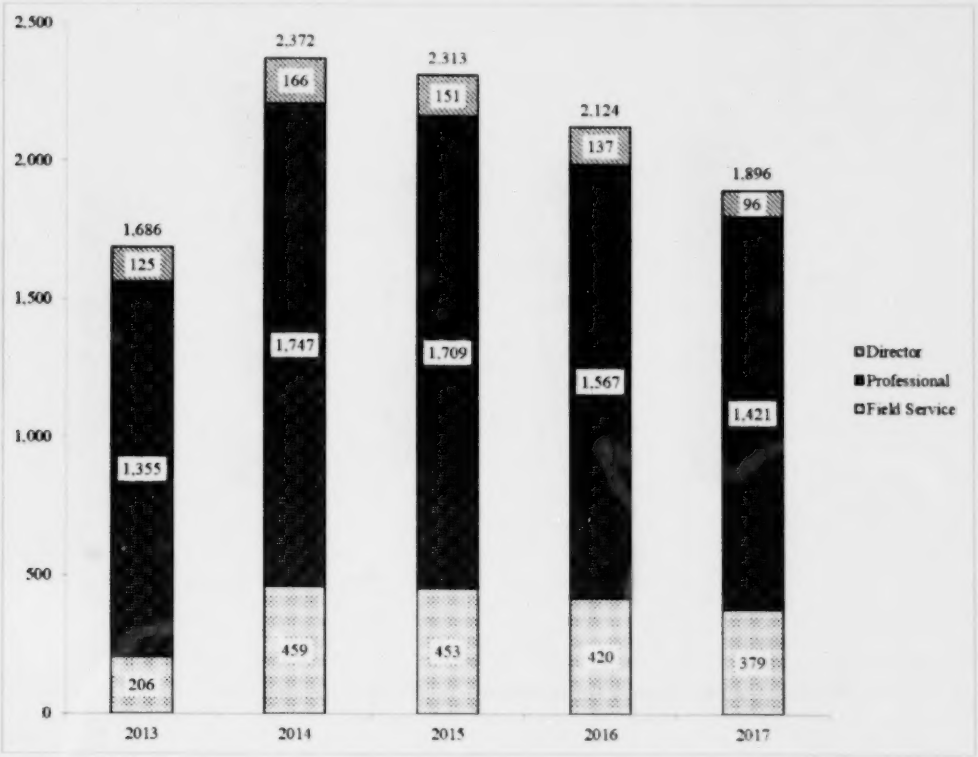
41. Additional support was provided by consultants with specialized expertise to develop and grade assessments and to scale up existing technology to meet the needs of the new system.

VI. External recruitment

A. Number of opportunities for selection

42. Figure VI provides details on the 10,391 opportunities for selection (counted as job openings in the Director, Professional, and Field Service categories) that were advertised between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2017. The number of opportunities per year varied, ranging from 1,686 to 2,372. The number of opportunities available in 2017 was 1,896.

Figure VI
Number of opportunities for selection by staff member category, 2013-2017



43. Most opportunities occurred in the Professional category, the largest category of staff members in the mobility population, with 7,799 opportunities, representing 75 per cent of the total number available. There were 1,917 opportunities in the Field Service category, representing 19 per cent of the total number available, and 675 opportunities at the Director level, representing 6 per cent.

B. Number of external appointments

44. Figure VII shows the number of external appointments during the period from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2017.[11] The overall number of external appointments was 3,112, and ranged from 545 to 718 annually. Table 18 shows the proportion of external appointments compared with all job opportunities for selection during the same period, which ranged from 26 to 37 per cent. A total of 2,436 external appointments were available in the Professional category, 490 external appointments in the Field Service category and 186 at the level of Director.

[11] An external appointment is defined as an initial appointment that lasts one year or longer.

Figure VII
Number of external appointments, 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2017

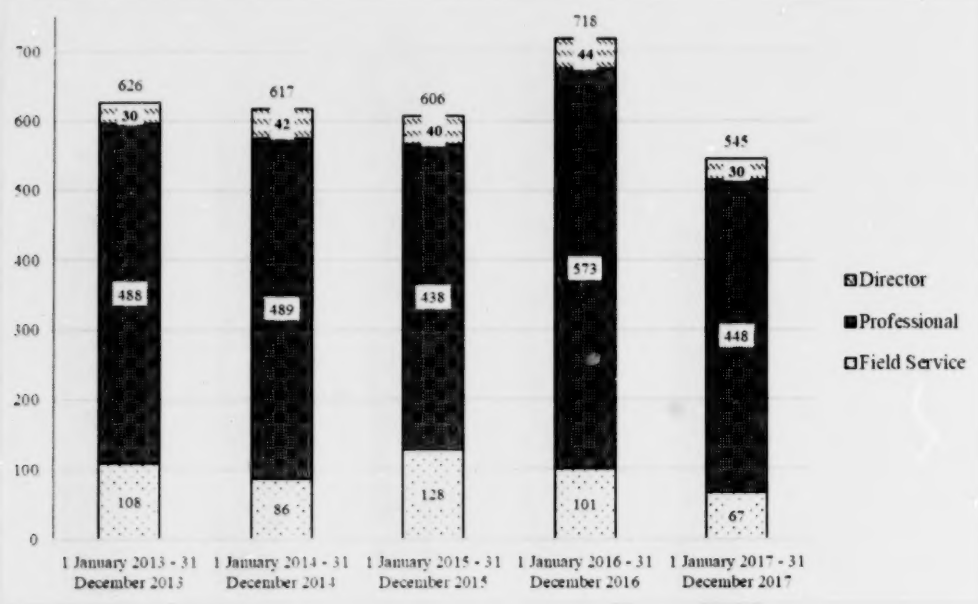


Table 18
Percentage of external appointments to all job opportunities

Period	*Total opportunities*	*Total external appointments*	*Percentage of external appointments to opportunities*
1 January 2013-31 December 2013	1 686	626	37
1 January 2014-31 December 2014	2 372	617	26
1 January 2015-31 December 2015	2 313	606	26
1 January 2016-31 December 2016	2 124	718	34
1 January 2017-31 December 2017	1 896	545	29
Total	**10 391**	**3 112**	**30**

VII. Key performance indicators

45. With the introduction of the new system, five indicators were established to assess the extent to which the objectives of mobility are achieved.

46. Indicator 1 is increased predictability and stability in staffing, as measured by comparing budgetary vacancy rates throughout the Secretariat and assessing whether such rates have become more even across the Secretariat owing to a more strategic deployment of staff members. Table 19 presents the average vacancy rates for regular budget posts in the Professional category and higher at Headquarters, in the main offices away from Headquarters and in the regional commissions, as at 31 December 2016 and 31 December 2017, and table 20 provides the corresponding figures for field operations as at 31 December 2016 and 31 December 2017. It is noted that vacancy rates for the main offices have decreased slightly from the end of 2016 to the end of

2017. Given that the new staffing system was in its early phases of implementation, it is unlikely that it would have had an impact on vacancy rates.

Table 19

Average vacancy rates for regular budget posts in the Professional category and higher at Headquarters, the main offices away from Headquarters and the regional commissions, as at 31 December 2016 and 31 December 2017

	As at 31 December 2016		*As at 31 December 2017*	
	Vacancy rate (percentage)	*Number of approved posts*	*Vacancy rate (percentage)*	*Number of approved posts*
Main office				
Vienna	6.2	174	6.5	174
Geneva	5.2	1 111	4.5	1 111
Nairobi	13.1	215	12.7	215
New York	11	2 142	8.3	2 144
Total, main offices	**8.9**	**3 642**	**8.0**	**3 644**
Regional commission				
Economic Commission for Africa	13.7	240	12.5	240
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	11.7	202	10.5	202
Economic Commission for Europe	4.2	125	6.2	125
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	12.5	219	12.6	219
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	9.4	123	9.7	123
Total, regional commissions	**10.3**	**909**	**10.3**	**909**

Table 20

Vacancy rates in the Field Service and Professional categories and higher in field operations as at 31 December 2016 and 31 December 2017

	As at 31 December 2016		*As at 31 December 2017*	
Selected missions and offices	*Vacancy rate (percentage)*	*Number of approved posts*	*Vacancy rate (percentage)*	*Number of approved posts*
Thematic cluster I: special and personal envoys of and special advisers to the Secretary-General[a]				
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar	–	4	–	–
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus	10.8	13	11.4	15
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide	16.3	8	3.1	8
Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara	–	2	44.9	2
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)	4.8	2	25.0	2
United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions	–	6	19.1	6
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria[b]	39.6	59	46.5	53
Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan	19.3	5	15.0	5
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen[b]	24.1	51	33.2	60
Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Conflict Prevention, including in Burundi	33.9	25	31.4	25
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region	31.2	18	30.3	18

Selected missions and offices	As at 31 December 2016		As at 31 December 2017	
	Vacancy rate (percentage)	*Number of approved posts*	*Vacancy rate (percentage)*	*Number of approved posts*
Thematic cluster II: sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels[a]				
Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea	–	1	28.6	1
Panel of Experts on Liberia	–	–	–	–
Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire	46.7	1	–	–
Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo	20.0	1	34.2	1
Panel of Experts on the Sudan	15.6	1	–	1
Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	7.7	2	23.5	3
Panel of Experts on the Islamic Republic of Iran	–	2	–	–
Panel of Experts on Libya	–	1	17.2	1
Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic	–	1	12.5	1
Panel of Experts on Yemen	30.4	6	34.4	6
Panel of Experts on South Sudan	49.7	1	–	1
Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)	79.2	8	32.9	8
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism	26.6	21	12.5	21
Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities	33.1	12	12.9	12
Support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) (concerning the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction)	–	3	–	3
Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate	3.6	35	8.4	36
Thematic cluster III: political offices, peacebuilding support offices and integrated offices[a]				
United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia[b]	39.1	91	28.1	117
United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel[d]	14.9	38	11.5	38
United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau	14.0	61	15.3	63
United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia	24.9	161	18.0	159
United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia	9.4	8	4.9	8
United Nations support team to the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission	0.9	10	0.8	10
Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon	17.4	20	15.8	20
United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa	29.1	29	12.4	29
United Nations Support Mission in Libya	16.0	153	26.4	195
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan	11.5	375	11.7	355
United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq	14.0	356	8.5	350
Peacekeeping missions[c]				
United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara	21.3	89	8.4	83
United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic	21.8	738	19.7	758
United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali	13.8	727	17.4	806
United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti	10.9	320	NA	NA

Selected missions and offices	*As at 31 December 2016*		*As at 31 December 2017*	
	Vacancy rate (percentage)	*Number of approved posts*	*Vacancy rate (percentage)*	*Number of approved posts*
United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	14.7	885	15.6	885
African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur	12.3	855	19.3	855
United Nations Disengagement Observer Force	7.1	42	7.1	42
United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus	5.6	36	10.8	36
United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon	7.0	254	5.0	254
United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei	24.2	157	13.1	160
United Nations Mission in Liberia	11.9	294	20.9	234
United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo	17.0	112	14.3	112
United Nations Mission in South Sudan	10.4	926	8.3	921
United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire	29.2	243	NA	NA
United Nations Support Office in Somalia	32.3	375	13.4	344
Others[c]				
United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy[d]	17.7	130	18.3	126
Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda	21.2	146	15.7	134
Support account	10.7	962	11.2	959

[a] Average from 1 January to 31 December 2016 and from 1 January to 31 December 2017.
[b] Includes commitment authority positions.
[c] Represents average authorized number of posts from July to December 2016 and from July to December 2017.
[d] Includes tenant units.

47. Indicator 2 is a more equitable sharing of the burden of service in difficult duty stations as measured by monitoring the number of staff who have served for long periods in D or E hardship locations. Table 21 provides a breakdown of the number of staff members with at least five years of continuous service in D or E duty stations as at 31 December 2017.

Table 21
Proportion of staff members in the mobility population as at 31 December 2017 who have spent more than five years at duty stations in the D or E category[a]

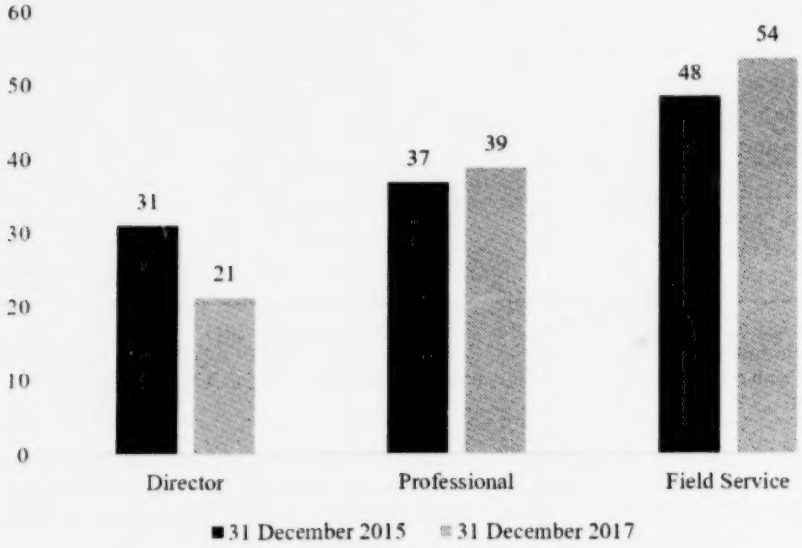
	Mobility population as at 31 December 2017		*Number of staff members at D or E duty stations*		*Number of staff members who have spent five years or more at D or E duty stations*		*Percentage of staff members at D or E duty stations who have spent five years or more in D or E duty stations*	
Category	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Director	414	202	72	22	13	7	18	32
Professional	4 835	3 408	1 183	404	481	135	41	33
Field Service	2 551	919	1 816	581	988	299	54	51
Total	**7 800**	**4 529**	**3 071**	**1 007**	**1 482**	**441**	**48**	**44**

Note: Following the implementation of Umoja, the approach for these calculations has been aligned with the manner in which continuous service is defined for other human resources purposes.
[a] Defined as mobility population staff members in D or E duty station category positions who have been continuously in regular assignments at the Director, Professional or Field Service level in duty stations categorized D or E. One year or longer temporary assignments are not included.

48. Figure VIII presents a comparison between the data for indicator 2 as at 31 December 2015[12] and as at 31 December 2017. The data show that there was a decrease at the Director level of those remaining in D or E duty stations for more than five years, while there were slight increases at the Professional and Field Service levels. It should be noted that the data reflect staff members remaining in any D or E duty station, not necessarily in the same D or E duty station.

Figure VIII

Comparison of percentage of staff members at D or E duty stations who have spent five years or more in D or E duty stations, 31 December 2015 and 31 December 2017



49. Indicator 3 is an increase in senior managers (P-5, D-1 and D-2) with geographic mobility. Table 22 provides the percentage of such managers with at least one geographic move as at 31 December 2017. It should be noted that, under the transitional measures put in place in the new system, the eligibility requirement to be considered for promotion to the P-5, D-1 and D-2 levels may include two lateral moves in lieu of the geographic move until 31 December 2020, as stipulated in the current staff selection and managed mobility system (see ST/AI/2016/1, sect. 25). As a consequence, senior managers may have been promoted on the basis of meeting the lateral move requirement and not the geographic move requirement.

[12] The data as at 31 December 2015 from the previous report of the Secretary-General on mobility (A/71/323/Add.1) have been updated using the revised calculation methods for the present report for ease of comparison.

Table 22
Number and percentage of senior staff members who had or had not made a geographic move as at 31 December 2017[a]

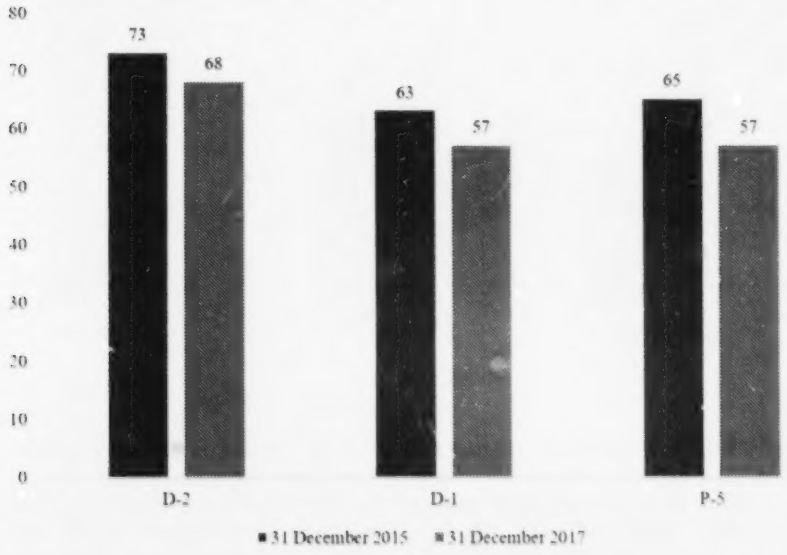
Level	*Senior managers with no geographic moves (a)*	*Senior managers with 1 or more geographic moves (b)*	*Total (a) + (b)*	*Percentage of senior managers with no geographic moves*	*Percentage of senior managers with 1 or more geographic moves*
D-2	100	46	146	68	32
D-1	267	203	470	57	43
P-5	871	644	1515	57	43
Total	**1238**	**893**	**2131**	**58**	**42**

Note: Following the implementation of Umoja, the approach for these calculations has been aligned with the manner in which continuous service is defined for other human resources purposes.

[a] A "geographic move" is defined as service in two different positions in the Professional category at two different duty stations for a continuous period of at least one year in each position.

50. When compared with the data as at 31 December 2015, there were slight decreases in the percentage of senior managers who had no geographic movements (see figure IX).

Figure IX
Comparison of percentage of senior managers with no geographic movements, 31 December 2015 and 31 December 2017



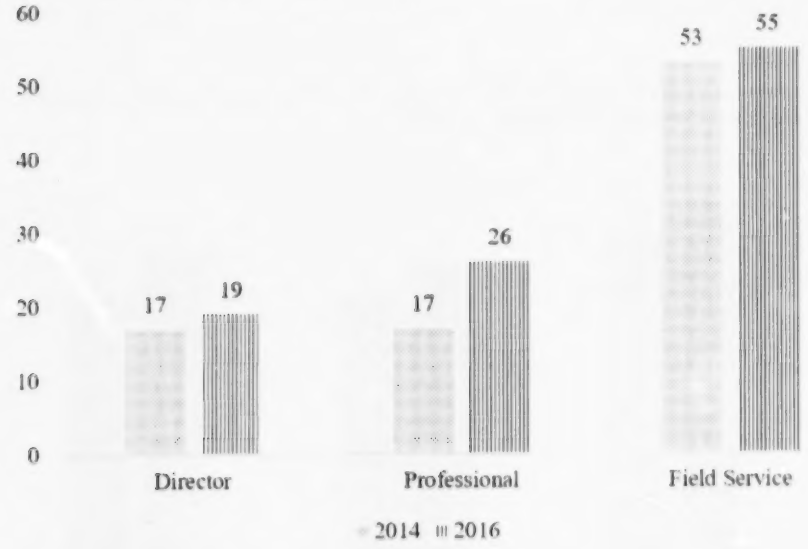
51. Indicator 4 is an increase in the proportion of staff members in family duty stations appointed from a non-family duty station. Table 23 provides the total number of staff members who moved to a family duty station, and the number (and percentage) of those who came from a non-family duty station in 2016, along with the targets set in 2015. The targets represent the distribution of staff members in non-family duty stations as at 31 December 2016. Figure X presents a comparison between the data for indicator 4 as at 31 December 2014 and the data as at 31 December 2016. Compared with 2014, there was a slight increase in all categories

in the number of staff members who moved from non-family to family duty stations, with the largest increase at the Professional level.

Table 23
Moves to family duty stations from non-family duty stations, 1 January to 31 December 2016

Category	*Number of staff members appointed to a family duty station*	*Number of staff members appointed from a non-family duty station to a family duty station*	*Percentage of staff members appointed from a non-family duty station to a family duty station*	*Target (percentage) for staff members at non-family duty stations as at 31 December 2016*
Director	36	7	19	18
Professional	540	143	26	22
Field Service	108	59	55	77
Total	**684**	**209**	**30**	**38**

Figure X
Comparison of percentage of staff members who moved from a non-family duty station to a family duty station, 2014 and 2016

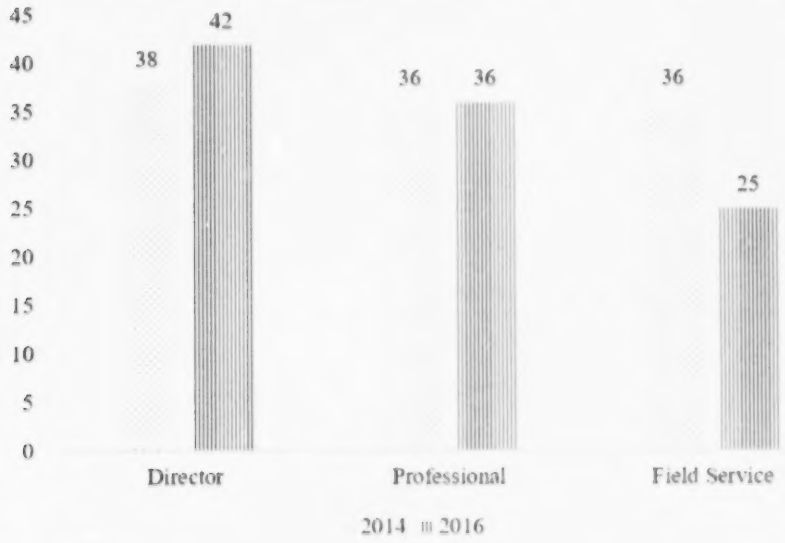


52. Indicator 5 is an increase in the proportion of staff in non-family duty stations appointed from a family duty station. Table 24 provides the total number of staff members who moved to a non-family duty station, and the number and percentage of those who came from a family duty station, along with the related targets. The targets represent the distribution of staff members in family duty stations as at 31 December 2016. Figure XI presents a comparison between the data for indicator 5 as at 31 December 2014 with the data as at 31 December 2016. Compared with 2014, there were minimal changes, with a slight increase in staff members who moved from family to non-family duty stations at the level of Director; and a decrease in those types of moves at the Field Service level.

Table 24
Moves to non-family duty stations from family duty stations, 1 January to 31 December 2016

Category	*Number of staff members appointed to a non-family duty station*	*Number of staff members appointed from a family duty station to a non-family duty station*	*Percentage of staff members appointed from a family duty station to a non-family duty station*	*Target (percentage) for staff members at family duty stations as at 31 December 2016*
Director	31	13	42	82
Professional	368	132	36	78
Field Service	348	88	25	23
Total	**747**	**233**	**31**	**62**

Figure XI
Comparison of percentage of staff members who moved from a family duty station to a non-family duty station, 2014 and 2016



VIII. Action requested of the General Assembly

53. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report.**

United Nations A/72/768*–S/2018/165*

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Security Council

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Agenda item 39
The situation in Afghanistan

Security Council
Seventy-third year

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/11 and Security Council resolution 2344 (2017), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on developments in Afghanistan.

2. The report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including political, humanitarian, development and human rights efforts, since the issuance of the previous report, on 15 December 2017 (A/72/651-S/2017/1056). The annex to the present report contains an assessment of progress made towards the achievement of benchmarks and indicators since the issuance of the report of 3 March 2017 (A/71/826-S/2017/189), in accordance with Security Council resolution 1868 (2009).

II. Relevant developments

3. The National Unity Government came under pressure owing to an extended impasse between the Presidential Palace and the Jamiat-e-Islami political party over the removal of a governor. The prolonged dispute dominated the political stage and threatened to undermine national unity. Negotiations between the two parties revived debate about the electoral system, as Jamiat-e Islami, joined by other political parties, sought to introduce changes prior to the next elections. Nevertheless, preparations for holding the 2018 parliamentary and district council elections under the current system continued, bolstered by the selection by the Independent Election Commission of a new administrative board. The executive and legislative branches developed a more constructive working relationship, as the National Assembly, the parliament of Afghanistan, passed the national budget for 2018 and approved 11 of 12 nominees for

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ministerial positions. The Government also took further steps to implement its anti-corruption strategy, and public revenue collection continued to increase thanks to improved administration services and enforcement. Private sector growth, however, was constrained by continuing security volatility, regulatory uncertainty and corruption. The security situation remained highly unstable, as anti-government elements conducted a series of high-profile attacks in urban centres, dampening public morale and threatening to undermine confidence in the Government. Those incidents also heightened tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, as Afghan officials accused Pakistan of allowing "terrorist safe-havens" on its territory. Civilian casualties remained very high throughout 2017, with children accounting for almost a third of the casualties, and with protracted fighting leading to thousands of new displacements. Lastly, there was little progress towards peace negotiations between the Government and the Taliban.

A. Political developments

4. Since the issuance of the previous report, national politics in Afghanistan have been dominated by an extended impasse between the Presidential Palace and the Jamiat-e Islami political party, which has occupied the attention of key figures in both the Government and the political opposition, undermined national unity and distracted attention from the national reform agenda. While the proximate cause of the crisis was the decision by President Ashraf Ghani to remove Mohammad Atta Noor from his position as Governor of Balkh Province, the impasse soon revealed competing conceptions of the origins of the Government's legitimacy. As the stalemate grew more protracted, negotiations between the two parties also became a staging ground for expressing broader opposition concerns, as political parties used the crisis to intensify their long-standing demands for reforms to the electoral system and the Constitution.

5. The dispute between the Presidential Palace and Jamiat-e Islami marked the culmination of long-standing tensions between the central Government and Mr. Noor, a prominent figure in the country's north who had served as Governor of Balkh since 2004. Although he had been a key supporter of Chief Executive Abdullah during the 2014 election campaign, relations between Mr. Noor and the two National Unity Government leaders, President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, deteriorated over the course of 2017. By mid-year, Mr. Noor had emerged as a leading critic of the Government and was a key member of a multiparty and multi-ethnic opposition coalition (the Coalition for the Salvation of Afghanistan), which was apparently intending to contest the parliamentary elections planned in 2018. On 18 December 2017, the Government announced its acceptance of a resignation letter that Mr. Noor had submitted several months earlier. Mr. Noor rejected the validity of the letter, insisting that his exit from public office could only be negotiated by Jamiat-e Islami, the party in which he serves as Chief Executive. The following day, Jamiat-e Islami issued a statement rejecting Mr. Noor's removal as a breach of the political agreement of September 2014, which forms the basis of the National Unity Government, in particular its provisions on the appointment of senior officials.

6. Those events resulted in several weeks of negotiations between the Presidential Palace and the Jamiat-e Islami party over the terms of Mr. Noor's departure, as the Government attempted to install a replacement as Governor of Balkh Province. On 3 January 2018, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance appointed former Jamiat-e Islami commander Mohammad Dawood as the new Governor. Mr. Dawood established an office in Kabul, while Mr. Noor, remaining in the Governor's office in

Balkh, threatened to arrest Mr. Dawood if he attempted to move to the Province. The two sides accused each other of arming supporters in Balkh. Tensions reached a peak on 16 January, when Mr. Noor issued a public statement warning Mr. Dawood against travelling to Balkh to attend the funeral of his father. The two sides eventually reached a compromise, allowing Mr. Dawood to visit Balkh without incident and return to Kabul.

7. Meanwhile, in Kabul, negotiations over Mr. Noor's departure rapidly assumed a broader dimension. The President and his supporters maintained that the Constitution was the ultimate basis of the Government's authority in Afghanistan, pointing out that it clearly gave the President alone the power to appoint and remove governors. By contrast, Jamiat-e Islami leaders argued that the executive provisions of the Constitution were superseded by the National Unity Government agreement of 2014, by which the President and the Chief Executive were required to agree on senior appointments, including governors. Jamiat-e Islami insisted on the implementation of the outstanding provisions of the agreement, including plans for the introduction of electronic national identity cards, district council elections and the inclusion of party-based proportional representation in the electoral system as conditions for Mr. Noor's departure. After numerous rounds of talks, the negotiations had still failed to reach an agreement, and the impasse continued into February. Adding to the intractability of the standoff was the perception within Jamiat-e Islami and other significant political groups that they had been marginalized by the President and that this marginalization had an ethnic dimension.

8. During the dispute, both sides sought to rally the support of other political actors. The Government sent a delegation to Turkey on 13 January and again on 4 February, in an apparent overture to Mr. Noor's coalition partner, First Vice-President Abdul Rashid Dostum. Mr. Dostum, who has been residing in Ankara since May 2017, reportedly for medical treatment, and who remains under indictment for the alleged sexual assault and illegal detention of a political rival, did not overtly respond to those advances. Meanwhile, other political figures aligned themselves with the position of Jamiat-e Islami. On 3 January, Kandahar Chief of Police Abdul Raziq issued a statement in support of Mr. Noor, claiming that the Governor could not be dismissed without broad consensus in the National Unity Government. On 14 January, a group of opposition figures, including the First Vice-President's son, Batur Dostum, and prominent parliamentarians Humayun Humayun and Zahir Qadir, convened at the residence of former Vice-President and Jamiat-e Islami member Ahmad Zia Massoud in an apparent show of unity against the Government. Concurrently, opposition parties sought to reinvigorate public debate over the electoral system. On 1 February, eight political parties and coalitions, including Hizb-i Islami (Arghandiwal), Jamiat-e Islami, Junbesh-e Milli, and Mehwar-e Mardom-e Afghanistan, issued a joint statement calling upon the Government to modify the Election Law of 2016 to include a role for political parties in elections.

9. The political volatility was exacerbated by rising public frustration over insecurity, in particular in urban centres. A spate of suicide and complex attacks throughout January 2018, in particular three major attacks in Kabul that inflicted hundreds of casualties, led to widespread calls through social media for the resignation of security officials. On 29 January, Kandahar Chief of Police Raziq issued a plea for calm, calling upon people to abstain from demonstrations despite their frustrations with the Government. Demonstrations occurred in Kabul on 1 February, as some protesters blamed the Government for failing to ensure security and others rallied outside the embassy of Pakistan, accusing that country of supporting the attackers. However, in contrast with the aftermath of the attack of 31 May 2017, those demonstrations did not attract significant crowds, probably

because of fears of further attacks. In response to the violence, President Ghani escalated his rhetoric against anti-government element groups, telling a gathering at the High Peace Council on 3 February that he would no longer seek reconciliation with the perpetrators of the attacks and blaming Pakistan for harbouring the Taliban.

10. That series of attacks and the public reactions to them further hindered the already minimal progress towards initiating peace negotiations between the Government and the Taliban. There was, however, incremental progress on the implementation of the Government's peace agreement of 2016 with Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin). In January, over several days, 78 prisoners affiliated with the group were released in accordance with the agreement, following months of delay caused by vetting procedures. This was the third and largest release of prisoners since the signing of the agreement.

11. Against this background of political uncertainty, relations improved between the executive and legislative branches, allowing the Government to pursue some elements of its agenda. On 4 December, the lower house of the National Assembly passed confirmation votes for 11 of 12 candidates nominated by the Government for ministerial positions. Nargis Nehan, the Government's nominee for the position of minister of mines and petroleum and the only woman proposed for a ministerial post, did not receive the required number of votes, but remained in her role in an acting capacity. On 17 January, the National Assembly approved the national budget. The budget had previously been rejected by the lower house on 13 December but was approved on the second attempt by a large majority of parliamentarians, following extensive consultations between the National Assembly and the Minister of Finance.

12. The Independent Election Commission emerged from several months of indecision and made progress with preparations for parliamentary and district council elections. On 10 December, the Commission presented its voter registration concept and budget to the Government and donors, following consultations with political stakeholders and civil society. For the first time, according to the Election Law, a voter list linking voters to specific polling stations is to be created — a long-standing recommendation by numerous observer groups and the Special Electoral Reform Commission of 2016. The Commission also decided to use existing national identity cards as a basis for voter registration, rather than produce cards itself. An operational plan and regulation were approved by the Commission on 9 January and the Commission initiated the procurement of materials, with the first materials arriving in Kabul on 14 February. The Commission signed numerous memorandums of understanding with the Government, civil society organizations and other public institutions, including the Electoral Complaints Commission, to establish a mutual cooperation framework that defined the respective mandates and responsibilities. On 7 January, the Independent Election Commission also held consultations in seven provinces, bringing together representatives of political parties, coalitions, civil society organizations and other electoral stakeholders. The fourth national election forum was held in Kabul on 14 February.

13. Steps were also taken to address leadership gaps in the Commission, after the removal of its Chair in November and the dismissal of the Chief Electoral Officer in October. The previous Selection Committee for electoral bodies conducted a nomination process for the vacant commissioner position, leading to the appointment of Mr. Sayyid Hafizullah Hashimi as the seventh commissioner on 13 January. The appointment enabled the Commission to conduct an internal election to designate its board, and the Commission elected former Spokesperson Gula Jan Abdulbadi Sayyad as its new Chair on 31 January. Independently, on 15 January, President Ghani

appointed Ms. Shahla Haque as acting Head of the Secretariat and Chief Electoral Officer. One of the first acts of the new Chair of the Independent Election Commission was to indicate that elections might need to be delayed from the current date in July 2018, but that they could still be held in 2018.

B. Security

14. By the end of 2017, the United Nations had recorded 23,744 security-related incidents. This was the highest number ever recorded, although it was only negligibly higher than the figure for 2016. Armed clashes continued to represent the highest proportion of incidents, at 63 per cent. There were 14,998 armed clashes in 2017, slightly more than in 2016, during which 14,977 clashes had been recorded. Incidents relating to the use of improvised explosive devices remained the second highest category of incidents, while air strikes continued at high levels. The 950 air strikes recorded in 2017 represented a 67.6 per cent increase compared with the same period the previous year. Targeted killings and abductions increased by 6 per cent compared with 2016, while suicide attacks increased by 50 per cent. The eastern region experienced the highest number of incidents, followed by the southern region, with the two regions accounting for 55 per cent of all security incidents.

15. The United Nations recorded 3,521 security-related incidents from 15 December 2017 to 15 February 2018, representing a 6 per cent decrease compared with the same period the year before. The reporting period witnessed a spike in large-scale incidents of violence, with two high-profile complex attacks and a large vehicle bombing in Kabul and an attack against an international non-governmental organization in the city of Jalalabad that took place between 20 and 27 January.

16. Despite this spate of violence in urban areas, the winter season saw a drop in the overall number of direct Taliban attacks around the country. The Taliban were not able to seize any provincial capitals or district administration centres during the reporting period, which Afghan and international security officials attributed to an intensification of air strikes by international military and the Afghan Air Force, as well as an increase in night raids by Afghan special forces. However, anti-government elements continued to place pressure on Afghan security forces, with coordinated attacks during the reporting period against Afghan National Defence and Security Forces checkpoints in Helmand, Kandahar and Nimroz Provinces in the south, Kunduz Province in the north-east, Ghazni Province in the south-east and Farah Province in the west. Those attacks inflicted significant casualties on Afghan security forces and allowed insurgents to capture weaponry and logistical supplies, but they did not result in significant territorial gains. The Taliban, however, consolidated their hold over mostly rural territory throughout 2017.

17. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province remained resilient, despite concerted operations by Afghan and international military forces. The group conducted several attacks against the civilian population and military targets, especially in Kabul and in the eastern Province of Nangarhar, and continued to engage in armed clashes against the Taliban as the two groups competed for control over territory. Meanwhile, in the northern region, self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province affiliates continued to engage in violent clashes against both Afghan Government and Taliban forces, suggesting that the group has expanded its geographical reach and begun to consolidate its presence outside the eastern part of the country.

18. There were 42 incidents involving United Nations personnel in 2017, including nine incidents of intimidation, 17 criminal incidents, one armed clash and three incidents of abduction.

C. Regional cooperation

19. Relations between Afghanistan and other countries during the reporting period were marked by growing tensions with Pakistan, following the spate of violence in January, despite high-level contacts between the Governments of both countries. On 17 December, military officials from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States of America met in Kabul to discuss military and counter-terrorism cooperation. On 16 January, 1,800 Pakistani clerics adopted a fatwa, or religious ruling, declaring suicide attacks to be "un-Islamic". A fatwa against violence and terrorism directed against targets in Afghanistan had been proposed as part of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group road map for peace agreed between Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and the United States in 2016. The January announcement, however, was received with scepticism in Kabul, reportedly because it did not specifically condemn terrorism and violence in Afghanistan. On 3 February, a high-level delegation led by the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Tehmina Janjua, visited Kabul to discuss the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity, covering the areas of military cooperation, counter-terrorism and intelligence sharing, economy, trade and transit, and refugee repatriation. This was followed by a second round of talks in Islamabad on 8 and 9 February, attended by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Hekmat Karzai. Following the second meeting, the Government of Afghanistan issued a press release stating that, while some progress had been made on the cooperation mechanism, there had been no concrete outcomes.

20. During the reporting period, the Government of Afghanistan continued to take steps towards closer regional cooperation with other neighbouring countries. Trade through the ports of Bandar Abbas and Chabahar in the Islamic Republic of Iran increased as of early 2017, marking a significant shift in the commercial relations of Afghanistan with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Government of Afghanistan also continued to expand its relations with Central Asian States. Bilateral relations with Uzbekistan received a boost following the official visit of President Ghani on 4 and 5 December, when the two countries signed more than 20 bilateral agreements covering areas such as security and intelligence cooperation, transit and customs procedures and infrastructure.

21. International cooperation in support of a peace process in Afghanistan made limited progress. On 26 December, the Government of China hosted the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan in Beijing for a first trilateral dialogue meeting, a format suggested by the Government of China in June 2017. The three sides reaffirmed their commitment to improving relations, deepening mutual beneficial cooperation, advancing connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative and fighting terrorism in all its forms. They also expressed support for an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process in Afghanistan. The Government of Indonesia also increased its engagement in efforts to establish peace in Afghanistan. In December, the Government of Indonesia hosted a delegation of Afghan High Peace Council officials and affiliated ulama and offered to assist Afghan reconciliation efforts. On 29 January, during a visit to Kabul, the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, suggested the establishment of a tri-national committee with participation of ulama from Afghanistan, Indonesia and Pakistan, to promote peace and reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan.

III. Human rights

22. On 15 February, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released the 2017 annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.[1] The Mission documented 10,453 civilian casualties (3,438 people killed and 7,015 injured) in 2017, a decrease of 9 per cent compared with 2016. Civilian deaths decreased by 2 per cent, while the number of civilians injured decreased by 11 per cent. UNAMA attributed 65 per cent of all civilian casualties to anti-government elements, 20 per cent to pro-government forces, 11 per cent to unattributed crossfire during ground engagements between anti-government elements and pro-government forces, 3 per cent to explosive remnants of war and approximately 1 per cent to cross-border shelling. The decrease in civilian casualties is mainly attributed to fewer civilians coming to harm from ground fighting, while civilian casualties from the indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices (in suicide and non-suicide attacks) increased. Conflict-related violence also destroyed livelihoods, homes and property, displaced families and limited access to education, health and other services.

23. The use of improvised explosive device tactics (in suicide and non-suicide attacks) caused 4,151 civilian casualties (1,229 people killed and 2,922 injured), comprising 40 per cent of all civilian casualties. This includes suicide and complex attacks, which resulted in 605 people being killed and 1,690 being injured, amounting to 22 per cent of all civilian casualties. Non-suicide improvised explosive device tactics, including the use of pressure-plate devices, accounted for 18 per cent of all civilian casualties. Ground engagements accounted for 3,484 civilian casualties (823 people killed and 2,661 injured), amounting to 33 per cent of all civilian casualties. Worryingly, UNAMA documented the highest number of civilian casualties by aerial strikes in a single year since 2009. The Mission documented 631 civilian casualties from aerial attacks (295 people killed and 336 injured), marking an increase of 7 per cent compared with 2016, with women and children comprising 62 per cent of those casualties. UNAMA documented 309 civilian casualties by the Afghan Air Force, 237 by international military forces and 76 by undetermined pro-government forces. Overall, the Mission documented 3,179 child casualties (861 children killed and 2,318 injured). While this represents a 10 per cent decrease compared with 2016, children still accounted for 30 per cent of all civilian casualties. Women casualties increased about 1 per cent, but female mortality increased by 5 per cent.

24. The start of 2018 witnessed a continuation of extreme harm to civilians from attacks by anti-government elements, occurring steadily throughout the month of January, including several egregious assaults deliberately targeting civilians in Kabul and Jalalabad. Between 20 and 27 January, three attacks killed at least 143 civilians and injured 265. On 20 January, five armed attackers opened indiscriminate fire inside the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul and proceeded to search for hotel occupants room by room, killing 24 civilians (including 16 foreign nationals) and injuring 15. On 24 January, four suicide attackers stormed the Save the Children compound in the city of Jalalabad after detonating an explosive-laden vehicle, killing 5 civilians and injuring 21. The premises of the non-governmental organization were damaged in the attack and the nearby office of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan was burned down. On 27 January, a suicide attacker detonated another explosive-laden vehicle painted as an ambulance outside the former Ministry of Interior compound in Kabul, killing at least 114 civilians and injuring at least 229. Two hospitals, the Afghan High

[1] UNAMA and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Afghanistan: protection of civilians in armed conflict — annual report 2017" (Kabul, 2018).

Peace Council, several foreign diplomatic missions and civilian shops, many of which were severely damaged, are located in that area.

25. From 1 October to 31 December 2017, the country task force on monitoring and reporting verified seven conflict-related incidents targeting health facilities and health-care personnel (three by the Taliban, two by undetermined armed groups and two by the National Directorate for Security), compared with 18 incidents in the previous quarter. Three of the incidents included targeted attacks on health-care personnel (two were killed and one was abducted), two incidents of threat against health-care personnel or patients, one incident of threat on a health-care facility and one indiscriminate attack causing physical damage to a clinic. The task force verified 13 incidents affecting education facilities and education-related personnel, including four incidents of direct targeting against schools and threats against education-related personnel, three indiscriminate attacks resulting in physical damage to schools and one incident resulting in the killing and abduction of education personnel. The task force attributed nine incidents to armed groups (eight to the Taliban and one to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province), two to pro-government militia, one to both Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and the Taliban in a crossfire incident and one to an unknown perpetrator. In addition, the military use of seven schools was verified, five by the Taliban and two by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

26. During the same period, the recruitment and use of 36 boys by parties to the conflict were documented, of which five were verified (two by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province, two by the Afghan National Police and one by the Taliban), compared with 19 verified cases in the previous reporting period. As at 31 December 2017, the Ministry of Justice had reported 171 children held on national security-related charges in juvenile rehabilitation centres across the country, compared with 300 at the end of December 2016, a decrease largely due to transfers and releases. UNAMA verified the sexual abuse of one child by the Afghan National Police and five cases of abduction involving 13 boys by the Taliban. UNAMA also verified six incidents of denial of humanitarian access (four by the Taliban, one by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province and one by an undetermined armed group), compared with eight such incidents in the previous reporting period.

27. Justice and redress for women remained low amid the continued prevalence of violence against women. As part of the implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law of 2009, the Anti-Harassment of Women and Children Law was published on 31 December 2017, clarifying the definition of harassment in public places and strengthening complaint procedures. With United Nations support, the Ministry of Justice completed countrywide consultations on the draft family law to be submitted to the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly.

28. The Government took steps to improve gender equality in the civil service. On 10 January, the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission issued a new policy to increase the representation of women in the civil service to 24 per cent in 2018. Finalization of the revised budget for the implementation of the plan remains to be approved.

29. On 14 January, the upper house of the National Assembly approved the consolidated text of a new anti-torture law. The draft law is currently under review by the Joint Commission of the National Assembly before its signing by the President and publication in the official gazette in March. The draft law contains a revised definition of the crime of torture in domestic law that is consistent with the definition contained in the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading

Treatment or Punishment. It also sets out provisions allowing victims of torture to claim redress in civil and criminal courts. On 28 January, the Government carried out the death sentence on three men convicted of the kidnapping and murder of a 13-year-old boy. This is the second group of prisoners to have been executed in recent months.

30. On 31 January, the window closed for victims to make representations to the International Criminal Court regarding a request by the Court's Prosecutor to initiate an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Afghanistan. Following preliminary deliberations, the Pre-Trial Chamber is expected to decide whether to authorize an investigation into the situation in Afghanistan.

31. During the reporting period, civil society activists and media personnel continued to face threats and attacks by anti-government elements and pro-government forces. UNAMA documented four incidents across the country. The Afghan Independent Bar Association held a series of workshops on accountability issues for lawyers, giving presentations on the new Penal Code and the draft anti-torture law. The workshops were attended by approximately 130 participants, 20 per cent of whom were women.

IV. Implementation of the Kabul Process and coordination of development assistance

32. Economic growth remained limited owing to the ongoing conflict, regulatory uncertainty and widespread corruption. Overall, estimated growth increased slightly, from 2.2 per cent in 2016 to 2.6 per cent in 2017. The forecast for 2018 is 3.2 per cent growth, provided that the security and political situation does not deteriorate significantly. There was a notable decline in growth in the agricultural sector, which accounts for the largest share of the economy. Growth in the sector was forecast to increase by only 1.5 per cent in 2017, compared with 6 per cent the previous year, while the industry and service sectors were projected to grow by 2 and 3.3 per cent, respectively. Inflation, while volatile, remained within the single digits. The trade deficit widened in the first half of 2017, as exports decreased by 3 per cent and imports increased by 8 per cent. The annual deficit, which is financed by foreign aid, is projected to reach 33 per cent of gross domestic product in 2017.

33. According to the Ministry of Finance, the Government increased revenue collection by 18 per cent to $2.44 billion in 2017, mainly through improvements in administration services and enforcement. Despite those gains, according to the World Bank in its Afghanistan Development Update, released in November 2017, the Government is expected to cover only around 40 per cent of budgeted expenditure with domestic revenue, leaving a fiscal gap of 15 per cent of gross domestic product at the end of 2017. This gap is projected to continue to widen, leaving the Government dependent on on-budget foreign civilian development assistance to maintain basic services and implement development programmes. The Government's development budget expenditure increased from 55 per cent in 2016 to 67 per cent in 2017, owing mainly to a reduced development budget. Additional reforms to the budgeting process were introduced in the national budget for 2018 and are expected to further increase expenditure levels.

34. The Government continued to invest efforts in strengthening accountability in the implementation of its development priorities through the high development councils. On 9 December, the Government presented an update to its Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework, reporting that 10 of 24 deliverables had

been completed. As part of its implementation of the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework, the Government also continued to develop 10 national priority programmes under the guidance of the high development councils. Two national priority programmes, the Citizens' Charter National Priority Programme and the Women's Economic Empowerment National Priority Programme, which were launched earlier, made further progress in implementation, while the remaining eight are in different stages of preparation.

35. The fight against corruption remained a principal component of the Government's reform agenda. On 9 December, the President issued a decree for the implementation of the Afghanistan National Strategy for Combating Corruption, which the High Council for Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption had adopted on 28 September 2017. The head of the High Council secretariat was also appointed. In January 2018, of the nine priority ministries required under the Strategy to prepare and submit detailed implementation plans, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled had submitted their completed implementation plans to the High Council's secretariat. Three ministries were in the process of finalizing their plans, while the remaining three reported delays in the process.

36. The Government continued to prioritize reforms within the security sector, with a focus on leadership within the Ministry of Defence. On 4 February, President Ghani signed retirement orders for 164 Afghan National Army generals in accordance with inherent law personnel reforms within the Ministry of Defence. Under the reforms, the Government aims to retire 400 generals within 18 months in an effort to improve professionalism and foster generational change within the Afghan National Army leadership. The transfer of the Afghan National Civil Order Police from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Defence, a key component of the Government's four-year plan on security sector reform, also continued.

37. Efforts were made to strengthen the legal anti-corruption framework. On 27 November, the lower house of the National Assembly approved the Law on Declaration and Registration of Assets of State Officials and Employees, which had been adopted through a presidential legislative decree on 28 October. For the first time, the law required members of the National Assembly and provincial and district councils to declare assets on an annual basis. The new Penal Code, which came into force on 15 February, further consolidated the anti-corruption legal framework, with such measures as the criminalization of land usurpation and the codification of all mandatory provisions under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. However, civil society organizations criticized the transfer of responsibility for asset registration and verification from the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption to the Administrative Office of the President under the new law. In addition, the grouping of all anti-corruption investigative institutions and functions in the Office of the Attorney General has raised concerns about the lack of an independent implementation and monitoring mechanism under the Strategy.

V. Humanitarian assistance and refugees

38. During 2017, 475,433 people were newly displaced by conflict. Between 15 December 2017 and 1 February 2018, 11,668 people were displaced. The highest concentration of recently displaced people is in the eastern region, which shelters more than 141,000 or 28 per cent of all people displaced in Afghanistan since the beginning of 2017. Many displaced families have been forced to move multiple times

and have no immediate prospect of returning to their areas of origin in safety and dignity.

39. With regard to Afghan citizens living in Pakistan, on 3 January, the Federal Cabinet of Pakistan decided to grant a 30 day-extension to proof-of-registration cards, which provide temporary legal stay to Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. On 31 January, another 60-day extension was issued. In total, 1.4 million Afghans residing in Pakistan hold such a card, while another one million are estimated to live in that country without registration. The registration of those undocumented Afghans in Pakistan commenced in August 2017, and over 804,000 applications had been received as at 15 February 2018.

40. During 2017, a total of 57,411 refugees returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan, 1,202 from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 204 from other countries. These figures represent a decrease of 85 per cent compared with 2016, when a total of 372,577 refugees returned. The reduction in returns was mainly due to an improved protection environment in Pakistan, as well as increased reluctance among refugees to return to a highly volatile security environment. Suspended on 1 December 2017 for a three-month winter pause, the voluntary repatriation programme from Pakistan of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is scheduled to resume on 1 March 2018.

41. The deportation and spontaneous return of undocumented Afghans from Pakistan continued, with 3,796 arrivals (3,200 spontaneous arrivals and 596 deportees) from 17 December 2017 to 15 February 2018. Since the beginning of 2018, the total number of undocumented returnees arriving from Pakistan has reached 2,896, down from 9,084 over the same period in 2017. During the reporting period, 92,723 Afghans arrived from the Islamic Republic of Iran (44,685 spontaneous arrivals and 48,038 deportees), 65,839 arriving after 1 January 2018. Of the undocumented returnees, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) assisted 3,226 people (85 per cent) from Pakistan and 4,185 people (5 per cent) from the Islamic Republic of Iran. In total, in 2017, 462,316 undocumented Afghans returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 98,191 from Pakistan. Between 15 December 2017 and 15 February 2018, IOM also assisted 683 voluntary Afghan returnees from Europe.

42. To help vulnerable families to get through the winter, UNHCR and partners provided winterization assistance to more than 53,000 families from mid-December to 4 February. In addition, humanitarian partners provided more than 185,000 blankets, and more than 13,000 families received winter clothing.

43. More than 5.5 million children were reached through polio vaccination campaigns conducted in December 2017 and January 2018. At the time of writing, there had been 14 cases of polio reported in Afghanistan in 2017, of which 5 were from Shah Wali Kot in Kandahar Province, which had been inaccessible for vaccination for more than six months in 2017. With support of the United Nations, vaccination teams managed to gain access to the district in November and have completed four vaccination campaigns since. In January 2018, three cases of wild poliovirus were reported, one each from Kama district of Nangarhar Province and Shah Wali Kot and Spinboldak districts of Kandahar Province. From 12 to 16 February, a subnational campaign supported by the United Nations was conducted by the Ministry of Public Health to vaccinate 5.5 million children in high-risk districts of 21 provinces of the country.

44. Constraints on humanitarian access continued, with a total of 39 incidents affecting United Nations and aid workers from 15 December to 31 January. In 2017, a total of 388 incidents were reported, compared with 200 in 2016. The higher number can be attributed partly to the protracted nature of the conflict in certain areas of the country as well as to improved reporting. In 2017, 21 aid workers were killed, 33 injured and 149 abducted. In December, 19 incidents against health workers or health facilities were recorded, bringing the total to 143 such incidents for the entire year. Incidents against health workers and facilities represented 38 per cent of all recorded incidents against humanitarian workers in 2017.

45. A warmer winter with less than average precipitation is having a strong impact on the planting season and will affect the quality and yield of the harvest of winter cereals as well as the forthcoming spring harvest. Accumulated precipitation in more than a dozen provinces was less than one third of the average in the last quarter of 2017. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recommended in December to provide vulnerable communities in drought-prone areas with agricultural assistance.

46. The Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations continued to support the Government in fulfilling its mine action obligations, including its presidency of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in 2018. This presidency is an opportunity to highlight the progress and continued commitments of Afghanistan on this issue at the international level. The average monthly rate of casualties from mines, explosive remnants of war and victim-activated explosive devices, referred to as "pressure-plate improvised explosive devices" in previous reporting, stands at 170 per month for 2017, an increase compared with 2016. The vast majority of casualties — 96.4 per cent — are due to explosive remnants of war and victim-activated explosive devices. The Service has been focusing on securing means to provide immediate, short-term support to those victims and is supporting the Afghan Directorate of Mine Action Coordination to develop a national strategy to assist victims as a priority in 2018.

47. The Mine Action Service and partners continued to provide risk education in communities affected by explosive hazards, as well as at encashment and transit centres to alert populations to the danger posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and victim-activated explosive devices. In total, 602,511 people, including 3,767 returnees at encashment or transit centres, received risk education from 1 November to 31 January. During the same time period, the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination, with support from the Mine Action Service, declared seven communities free of mines, which enabled approximately 8,618 individuals across 290,500 m^2 to move freely within their communities and facilitated improved agricultural activities and market access. It is estimated, however, that 3,227 minefields, 315 battlefields and 38 contaminated firing ranges remain, affecting 1,423 communities.

48. On 15 January, the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations jointly launched the Humanitarian Response Plan (2018–2021), in which they asked for $437 million for 2018 to assist 2.8 million people across all sectors of intervention. On 22 December 2017, the United Nations announced the first standard allocation of 2018 of more than $20 million from the Afghanistan Common Humanitarian Fund in order to start implementing the Humanitarian Response Plan. The Plan for 2017 was funded up to $317.5 million, or 78 per cent of the requested funding of $409 million.

VI. Counter-narcotics

49. The Government of Afghanistan, supported by its international partners, continued its counter-narcotics operations during the reporting period. From 1 November to 31 December 2017, Afghan law enforcement authorities conducted a total of 445 counter-narcotics operations, which resulted in seizures of 391 kg of heroin, 31 kg of morphine, 8,141 kg of opium, 2 kg of methamphetamine, 38,547 kg of hashish, 1,256 kg of solid precursor chemicals, 1,437 litres of liquid precursor chemicals and 1,590 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) K-tablets (synthetic drugs). These seizures resulted in 531 arrests. The opiate seizures (opium, morphine and heroin combined and calculated as morphine equivalent) recorded during 2017 were the highest since 2012. Opium prices dropped significantly (down 41 per cent from December 2016 to December 2017), owing to the record harvests reported in 2017, but a similar drop was not observed with heroin prices (a decline of 7 per cent when comparing December 2016 with December 2017). The relatively stable price of heroin is likely attributable to the high rate of opiate interdictions throughout 2017, in combination with high prices for the precursor acetic anhydride following the interdiction of shipments into Afghanistan in early 2017.

VII. Mission support

50. As at 31 January, the Mission's vacancy rates were 9.5 per cent for international staff and 6.4 per cent for national staff, compared with the approved rates of 14 per cent and 7.5 per cent, respectively. Representation of female staff, despite special measures granted for the Mission to recruit and retain more national female staff, remained very low. As at 31 January, the female representation for each category of staff stood at: 30 per cent for international staff, 35 per cent for United Nations Volunteers, 9 per cent for National Professional Officers and 7 per cent for Local level staff. Between 1 December 2017 and 31 January 2018, UNAMA conducted 122 road and 12 air missions, as well as 374 reverse outreach missions during which district representatives visited UNAMA field offices.

VIII. Observations

51. Since the previous report, another spate of horrific violence, including suicide attacks in Kabul and Jalalabad, killed and wounded hundreds of people, most of them civilians. These attacks naturally provoked public outrage, leading prominent figures to call for a renewed emphasis on military action against armed opposition groups rather than reconciliation. In the wake of such violence, the task of bringing the parties together in a credible peace process has become both more difficult and more urgent. I strongly believe that only through a negotiated peace settlement can the tremendous human suffering caused by this conflict be brought to an end.

52. Constructive engagement by international partners as well as regional consensus on peace in Afghanistan are essential to creating a conducive environment for peace talks. Given the number of platforms and processes that have emerged, it is my hope that the sum thereof will contribute to a peaceful outcome in Afghanistan. In this regard, I hope that the renewed high-level direct contact between officials of Afghanistan and Pakistan will reverse the recent increase in tensions between the two countries. I urge the two Governments to continue to engage in dialogue at all levels to promote peace, stability and the mutual interests of both countries. I welcome the

trilateral dialogue of Ministers for Foreign Affairs facilitated by the Government of China in December 2017.

53. The impasse between the President's supporters and Jamiat-e Islami has exacerbated divisions within the National Unity Government, placing additional pressure on already fragile political arrangements. The restraint shown by all parties so far has helped to ensure that these tensions have been confined to the political realm and have not escalated into violent confrontation. The crisis has, however, already diverted attention from urgent policy issues, and I am concerned that its prolongation may provoke instability and further delay elections. Restraint from the use of violence must be paired with political flexibility in negotiating a solution. I stress the need to resolve the dispute peacefully and expeditiously to enable the Government to focus on the myriad security, humanitarian, development and governance challenges facing Afghanistan.

54. The Independent Election Commission has appointed its new Chair and administrative board and is taking steps towards commencing voter registration. Electoral preparations must be accelerated if credible parliamentary and district council elections are to be held in 2018. This will depend on not only the work of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission but also the coordinated efforts of other government entities, as well as the availability of sufficient funding and the provision of adequate security measures. I encourage the electoral management bodies to work closely with relevant institutions and civil society to ensure timely and transparent electoral preparations. Noting the ongoing public concern about the feasibility of timely elections, I also encourage all stakeholders, including political actors, civil society representatives and religious leaders, to work constructively with the electoral management bodies to strengthen public confidence in the electoral process.

55. The persistently high numbers of armed clashes and their corresponding impact on civilians remain a deep concern. The year 2017 marked the highest number of recorded civilian casualties from the indiscriminate use by anti-government elements of suicide improvised explosive devices. The first months of 2018 saw a particularly brutal series of attacks by anti-government elements deliberately targeting civilians, including the targeting of aid organizations and foreigners and the misuse of the protected emblem of the Red Crescent Society on a vehicle painted as an ambulance to transport a suicide improvised explosive device into a restricted access area. The perpetrators of these atrocious acts must be held accountable.

56. The toll in lives lost to mines, explosive remnants of war and pressure-plate improvised devices remains high. Noting the Government's obligation to track, mark and remove explosive remnants of war pursuant to the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Protocol V) and the obligations of international military forces to assist the Government in ensuring that leftover devices are destroyed, the United Nations stands ready to provide necessary support as designated in article 3 of Protocol V.

57. The Government has made commendable efforts in implementing the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women as well as upholding Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. By reinserting the chapter on the elimination of violence against women into the Penal Code and finalizing its third periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Government can send a reassuring signal to all Afghans of its

commitment to protecting the lives and rights of women. Furthermore, by providing human and financial resources, the Government can ensure the effective implementation of its national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which would strengthen the meaningful participation of women in political, peace and security processes.

58. The continued judicial executions in the country are a source of concern. Those who are investigated, prosecuted and sentenced for capital offences are not being afforded the necessary fair trial guarantees provided for under domestic law and the international human rights conventions to which Afghanistan is a party. I call upon the Government of Afghanistan to place a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to its abolition.

59. The Government has taken further steps towards implementing its anti-corruption strategy, in particular by strengthening the legal framework on anti-corruption. By approving the Law on Declaration and Registration of Assets of State Officials and Employees, the National Assembly took an important step towards improving the transparency and accountability of the political institutions of Afghanistan. Noting the concerns raised by civil society groups about the transfer of responsibility for asset registration from the independent High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption to the Administrative Office of the President and the consolidation of anti-corruption investigative functions in the Office of the Attorney General, I encourage the Government to develop an independent monitoring mechanism under the strategy.

60. In the year since it was established, the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre has performed commendable work in prosecuting high-level officials, with a particular focus on ending impunity in the security sector. Recently, however, the number of accused persons being tried in absentia has increased, owing to the lack of enforcement of arrest warrants. I encourage the Ministry of the Interior and other relevant entities to cooperate with the Centre to ensure that accused persons are brought to face trial.

61. In the face of significant security and governance challenges, Afghanistan has made considerable progress on its fiscal reform agenda. The Government continued to improve its public revenue collection and introduced reforms to the budgetary process, which have brought the national budget into closer alignment with international standards. Despite these gains, projected economic growth figures for Afghanistan, while improving, are not yet sufficient to absorb the hundreds of thousands of expected new entrants into the labour market in the coming years. Acknowledging the real progress made in the fiscal arena, I encourage the Government to introduce further policy reforms that can help generate private sector growth and provide job opportunities to the next generation of Afghans.

62. I thank all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan and my Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto, for their continued dedication under such challenging conditions to fulfil our commitments in support of the people of Afghanistan.

Annex

Progress achieved against benchmarks

I. Security

Benchmark: sustainable Afghan security institutions and processes capable of ensuring peace and stability and protecting the people of Afghanistan

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Increase in the number of national police and national army personnel mentored, trained and operational according to an agreed structure	• In January 2017, President Ashraf Ghani announced the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces road map with four key objectives to be achieved by 2020: to increase fighting capabilities; to develop leaders; to ensure the unity of command and military efforts; and to counter corruption. • In 2017, the authorized force level of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces was 352,000 Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police personnel and 30,000 Afghan local police personnel. The overall authorized strength of the Ministry of Defence was 195,000 military personnel and 5,502 civilians, while the authorized strength of the Afghan National Police was 157,000 personnel. • In 2017, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces increased their offensive capabilities by initiating the expansion of the Afghan Special Security Forces and the modernization of the Afghan Air Force, including major portions of the Afghan Border Police and the Afghan National Civil Order Police. The expansion of the Afghan Special Security Forces will result in an increase in the force level, from 19,022 personnel authorized for 2017 to 33,896 by 2020. The number of Afghan Air Force personnel authorized for 2017 was 8,407, while the number authorized for 2018 is 8,626. The Afghan Air Force received its first two UH-60 Black Hawks in late September 2017 and is due to more than double the size of its fleet by 2020. • In 2017, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces began to target corrupt and criminal influences in their ranks, referring cases to the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre and other prosecutorial bodies. Further work is needed in the Forces to improve vetting and tackle networks and nepotism.

II. Peace, reintegration and reconciliation

Benchmark: national dialogue and regional engagement towards pursuing constructive and inclusive processes to foster a political environment conducive to peace

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Development and implementation of inclusive national and regional processes to enhance peace, reintegration and reconciliation efforts	• On 6 June 2017, the Government convened the first meeting of the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation, bringing together representatives of 26 countries and organizations, including the United Nations. At the meeting, which was organized with technical assistance from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), participants expressed support for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process and for regional security cooperation. • In June 2017, the High Peace Council was restructured, and a new Chair, Karim Khalili, was appointed. Under the new structure, the Council has a total of 52 members, of whom 12 are women. • In September, the High Peace Council adopted a new operational strategy with a streamlined mandate, focused on public outreach and national consensus-building. In the same month, donors agreed to continue to fund the Council's operational costs for three-month terms on a rolling basis and to fund outreach activities on a project basis. • On 20 November, the National Security Adviser, Hanif Atmar, presented the Government's initial strategy on peace and reconciliation to a meeting of representatives of the international community. • In November and December, UNAMA coordinated and provided inputs to the international community on a set of common messages to assist the Government in finalizing its peace strategy. Many of the points raised by the international community were taken into account in the Government's subsequent draft vision paper in early January 2018. • Following the peace agreement of September 2016 between the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin), the leader of Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin), Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, returned to Kabul in May 2017. By 17 January 2018, 160 prisoners affiliated with the group had been released from Pul-e Charkhi, Bagram and Kandahar prisons in furtherance of the peace agreement.
Increased ability by the Afghan authorities to gather and provide substantiated, updated and accurate information to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011)	• In 2017, the Government continued to provide substantiated, updated and accurate information to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) • On 5 May 2017, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted its eighth report, pursuant to resolution 2255 (2015), concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan (see S/2017/409). The report was based in large part on information provided by the Afghan authorities.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• When the Security Council Committee visited Afghanistan on 29 and 30 October 2017, the Chief Executive, Abdullah, reiterated the Government's commitment to pursuing individuals and entities using the sanctions mechanisms. Further action remains pending.
Increased public support for the peace process through engagement at the community level and with civil society	• In 2017, UNAMA facilitated a total of 14 local peace initiatives and provided mediation support to foster Afghan-led mediation and reconciliation efforts at the provincial and district levels. The initiatives, involving stakeholders from 16 provinces, included conflict resolution initiatives, community dialogues, jirgas and outreach gatherings with ulama (religious clerics), tribal representatives, provincial council members, provincial peace council members, government officials and youth and women activists.
	• On 25 December 2017, the High Peace Council organized a gathering of more than 700 religious scholars in Kabul. At the gathering, religious leaders agreed upon a declaration expressing support for Afghan-led peace efforts, including direct talks between the Government and the Taliban, and called upon the Taliban to renounce violence.
	• To mark the Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security in 2017, UNAMA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women organized dialogues from 17 October to 22 November, which attracted 364 participants, including 303 women from 21 provinces. The theme of the dialogues was "Women's participation in the electoral process".

III. Governance and institution-building

Benchmark: extension of government authority throughout the country through the establishment of democratic, legitimate, accountable institutions, down to the local level, with the capacity to implement policies and to become increasingly capable of sustaining themselves

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Increased ability of the Afghan authorities and independent electoral institutions to manage and conduct genuine and periodic elections, with due regard to women's participation and constitutionally guaranteed quotas	• In 2017, the Independent Election Commission demonstrated its ability to commission technical studies, consider options for introducing technology into electoral processes, conduct public outreach and conclude cooperation agreements with key partners, both national and international.
	• On 21 February 2017, the Commission submitted a technical study on electoral constituencies to the Government, in which it proposed the division of 12 large provinces with more than five seats into smaller constituencies, leaving the remaining 22 provinces unaffected.
	• On 22 June, the Commission announced that parliamentary and district council elections would be held on 7 July 2018.
	• On 25 October 2017, the Commission announced its decision to revert to a paper-based voter registration option.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• On 20 November, the Commission and the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission signed a memorandum of understanding regarding the recruitment of Commission staff, aiming to accelerate the process and set up a mechanism to ensure transparency.
	• In November 2017, the Commission signed a memorandum of understanding with the Afghanistan Central Civil Registration Authority, which provided clarification on the roles of the two institutions in relation to voter registration.
	• On 10 December, the Commission submitted the voter registration concept and budget to the Government and donors following consultations with political stakeholders and civil society. The voter registration operational plan and regulations were subsequently approved on 9 January 2018. For the first time, as envisaged in the Election Law of 2016, a voter list linking voters to specific polling stations will be created using national identity cards.
	• On 11 December 2017, the Independent Election Commission announced that it had approved the locations of 7,355 polling centres following a review of locations that had commenced in August 2017. The Electoral Complaints Commission has also begun to review nearly 400 complaints in relation to the assessment of polling centres.
	• By the end of January 2018, leadership gaps in the Independent Election Commission had been partially addressed through the appointment of Shahla Haque as acting Head of the Secretariat and Chief Electoral Officer. Her appointment followed the dismissal of the previous Chief Electoral Officer, Imam Mohammad Warimach, by President Ghani in October 2017. Ms. Haque is the first woman to be appointed Chief Electoral Officer of the Commission. Following the dismissal of the Chair of the Commission, Najibullah Ahmadzai, in November 2017, a new Commissioner, Sayyid Hafizullah Hashimi, was appointed by President Ghani on 13 January 2018 in a process criticized by some civil society activists. On 31 January, the Commission elected Gula Jan Abdulbadi Sayyad as its new Chair. Wasima Badghisi, a woman who was re-elected Deputy Chair for Operations in January, had served as Chair before Mr. Sayyad was elected.
	• On 4 October 2017, UNAMA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission signed the project document for electoral support, enabling continued United Nations assistance to electoral processes in Afghanistan. On 30 December, key donors pledged to fund up to 90 per cent of the voter registration budget, estimated at $28 million, while the Government would cover the remaining costs.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• The Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission held three national election forums in Kabul, on 19 September, 20 October and 6 December, with representatives from civil society groups, political parties and coalitions, tribal elders and other Afghan political stakeholders. On 7 January 2018, the Independent Election Commission held its first set of provincial-level elections forums in Balkh, Bamyan, Herat, Kandahar, Kunduz, Nangarhar and Paktya, and there are plans to hold such forums on a regular basis in all provinces.
Establishment of the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee and development of anti-corruption benchmarks	• On 19 January 2017, the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee released its eleventh six-month report, covering the period from July to December 2016. The report included a discussion of the Committee's collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health in implementing recommendations of the Committee.
	• On 7 July, the Committee released its special report on vulnerabilities to corruption in the Office of the Afghan Attorney General, in which it noted that the Office of the Attorney General had introduced a number of positive internal organizational changes, including performance monitoring and evaluation and compliance with merit-based recruitment.
	• With regard to progress in its monitoring and evaluation programme, the Committee issued 261 recommendations in 2017, 55 of which have been implemented, bringing the total number of recommendations issued and implemented since 2010 to 862 and 215, respectively.
Empowerment of anti-corruption institutions to enable them to oversee a whole-of-government approach to anti-corruption	• A new Land Management Law was issued by presidential decree on 4 March 2017. The law makes the administration of public land more efficient and transparent and reduces institutional vulnerabilities to corruption. In April, a revised land allocation law was drafted with substantial input from UNAMA and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The aims of the law are to streamline processes, increase transparency and reduce institutional vulnerabilities to corruption in the allocation of public land. The law is awaiting presidential endorsement.
	• On 28 September, the High Council for Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption adopted the Afghanistan National Strategy for Combating Corruption. On 9 December, a presidential order was issued for the implementation of the strategy by nine priority ministries. As at 31 January 2018, three of the nine priority ministries had submitted anti-corruption action plans and three were in the process of finalizing their plans.
	• On 3 October 2017, the President inaugurated the multi-stakeholder forum of the Open Government Partnership in Afghanistan, comprising representatives of the Government, civil society and the private sector. The Partnership is a global compact under which member States commit to engaging non-State actors to make governance more accountable and transparent.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• On 28 December, the President approved the national action plan for the Open Government Partnership, consisting of 11 commitments, including the development of a protection policy for women in conflict and emergency situations and the establishment of special courts to address violence against women in 12 provinces. Afghanistan joined the Partnership in 2016.
Annual publication of the asset declarations of public officials	• In 2017, the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption issued asset declaration forms to 5,661 senior government officials, received 2,673 completed forms and verified 47 submissions, bringing the total number of forms issued, received and verified since the establishment of the asset declaration programme in 2008 to 16,508, 10,061 and 280, respectively. The 280 verified forms include those of the President, the Chief Executive, the Second Vice-President, all the Cabinet Ministers and 33 of 34 provincial governors. The low level of verification of assets is due to limited cooperation by the targeted officials.
	• On 28 October 2017, the President issued Legislative Decree No. 1270, transferring the assets registration and verification function from the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption to the Administrative Office of the President to improve compliance.
Increased capacity of civil servants at the central, provincial and district levels to discharge functions and deliver services	• In 2017, the Civil Service Training Institute trained 2,540 civil servants, including 533 women (21 per cent), which represented 65 per cent of the target of 3,850. The Training Institute could not achieve its target owing to significant delays in the recruitment of trainers. The civil servants were trained in computer applications, the English language and human resource management, as well as administration and financial management.
Increased transparency and effectiveness of civil service appointments	• In 2017, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance facilitated the appointment of 275 of 386 district governor positions and 33 of 41 deputy provincial governors positions through a merit-based recruitment system. Of the persons appointed, only one deputy provincial governor and two district governors were women.
Strengthened civil service reform supported by a comprehensive approach to capacity-building and donor-funded technical assistance	• On 11 March 2017, a new Chair began work at the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission as part of an initiative to strengthen the implementation of civil service reforms. In 2017, the Chair facilitated the appointment of new commissioners and began to develop a five-year strategic plan with the objectives of institutionalizing merit-based recruitment in Government, maintaining a competitive compensation package in the civil service and prioritizing reforms in key areas, such as pensions and the reintegration of returning Afghan refugees.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• The Government took steps to improve gender equality in the civil service. On 10 January 2018, a new policy was issued to increase the representation of women in the civil service from 15 per cent in 2017 to 17 per cent in 2018. The policy introduces a quota system, special administrative privileges, workplace protection and better career development opportunities for women in the civil service.
Implementation of the subnational governance policy and development of subnational regulatory, financing and budgetary frameworks	• In 2017, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, with support from UNAMA and UNDP and in consultation with national and subnational institutions, civil society and the international community, facilitated the formulation of a draft subnational governance policy. On 10 January 2018, the Directorate presented the draft policy to the President for endorsement, after which it will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval.
	• In February 2017, the Ministry of Economy, with the support of UNAMA, facilitated the formulation of the provincial development plans for 2017 in all 34 provinces, using the provincial planning guidelines that it had developed in 2016. In November 2017, the guidelines were reviewed and revised, and, in January 2018, the Ministry of Economy launched an orientation programme for line departments in all 34 provinces on the revised guidelines in preparation for the provincial planning process of 2018.
Development and publication of criteria for administrative boundaries	• In 2017, after the criteria for administrative boundaries in urban areas had been developed, four municipal boundaries were completed and mapped, bringing the total number of boundaries mapped to 26 of 34 provincial municipalities. Boundaries for 820 urban neighbourhoods were also mapped during the year.
Establishment of adequate infrastructure for functioning government institutions, especially at the subnational level	• In 2017, three citizen service centres of offices of provincial governors were constructed to increase the access of citizens to the issuance of national identity cards and other government services. In addition, 13 offices of provincial governors and 11 municipalities were equipped with Internet infrastructure to improve information technology management systems and enable improved communication with constituents. Eight small-scale infrastructure projects enabled municipalities to improve the delivery of services, benefiting 157,168 citizens, including 45,728 women.
Establishment of credible and accessible judicial and penal systems that respect and uphold the human rights of all citizens	• On 4 March 2017, the President endorsed the revised Penal Code, which consolidates crimes and punishments into a single code and incorporates provisions of international law, including international human rights conventions and treaties. Improvements to the Code include the adoption of modern, gender-neutral definitions of crimes, such as rape, the prohibition of the use of torture, the prohibition of land-grabbing, the criminalization of and the imposition of strict punishments for the practice of *bacha bazi* and a significant reduction in the number of crimes that are punishable by death.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• In 2017, the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre, which was established in 2016, embarked on the processing of more complex cases involving senior government officials, in particular individuals from the security sector. As at 31 January 2018, the Centre had processed 27 cases involving 114 accused persons at the primary court level, including 14 generals from the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior and 3 deputy ministers, who were convicted of offences and subjected to prison terms ranging from 1.5 to 14 years.

IV. Human rights

Benchmark: improved respect for human rights of Afghans, in line with the Afghan Constitution and international law, with particular emphasis on the protection of civilians, the situation of women and girls, freedom of expression and accountability based on the rule of law

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Reduction in the number of incidents of unlawful use of force and intimidation of civilians, through compliance of relevant actors with international law	• In 2017, UNAMA documented 10,453 civilian casualties (3,438 people killed and 7,015 injured), a decrease of 9 per cent compared with 2016. UNAMA attributed 65 per cent of the civilian casualties to anti-government elements, 20 per cent to pro-government forces, 11 per cent to unattributed crossfire during ground engagements between anti-government elements and pro-government forces, 3 per cent to explosive remnants of war and approximately 1 per cent to cross-border shelling from Pakistan into Afghanistan. The combined use of improvised explosive device tactics caused 4,151 civilian casualties (1,229 people killed and 2,922 injured), comprising 40 per cent of all civilian casualties in 2017, followed by ground engagements accounting for 3,484 civilian casualties (823 people killed and 2,661 injured). Conflict-related violence continued to kill and injure women and children in 2017. UNAMA recorded 3,179 child casualties (861 children killed and 2,318 injured), a 10 per cent decrease compared with 2016. The Mission documented 1,224 women casualties (359 women killed and 865 injured) in 2017, an increase of less than 1 per cent, although female mortality increased by 5 per cent. Women comprised 12 per cent of conflict-related civilian casualties. • In 2017, the Tawheed Centre in the Office of the National Security Council, with support from the Resolute Support Mission of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, created a database to strengthen the Government's capacity to track conflict-related civilian casualties. In addition, the Resolute Support Mission trained 305 officers of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in measures to mitigate civilian casualties.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• The Civilian Casualties Avoidance and Mitigation Board held three meetings in 2017, on 15 February, 23 August and 5 December, during which it addressed practical efforts undertaken by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and international military forces to improve the protection of civilians.
	• In 2017, the Afghan National Police established 12 additional child protection units, bringing the total number of units to 33, covering 33 of 34 provinces in the country.
	• UNAMA and the United Nations Children's Fund trained 22 communication officers of the National Directorate of Security, 17 chiefs of police in Kabul district and 11 teachers on the protection of children in armed conflict in 2017.
	• In May 2017, the revised Penal Code was published in the Official Gazette. It includes provisions prohibiting and criminalizing the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and a new chapter criminalizing the practice of *bacha bazi*. It also introduces definitions of international crimes in line with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
	• In August, the Government ratified the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects of 1980, including all amendments and Protocols thereto.
	• In October, the Government formally endorsed the national policy on the prevention and mitigation of civilian casualties, the aim of which is to protect civilians from conflict-related harm.
	• On 17 October, UNAMA held its second annual civil-military dialogue on the protection of civilians in Kabul, during which high-level government and military representatives and the international protection community discussed plans to meet obligations under the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the implementation of the national policy on the prevention and mitigation of civilian casualties.
	• On 5 December, the Ministry of Defence launched its child protection policy, which focuses on the prevention of six grave child rights violations in armed conflict and the use by the military of education and health facilities.
Improved awareness by Afghans of their rights and by the Government of its obligations	• In 2017, UNAMA published six reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including two special reports. UNAMA utilized the reports for awareness-raising and advocacy to promote respect for international humanitarian and human rights laws by all parties to the conflict.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• In March 2017, the Anti-Torture Law and the new Penal Code were issued by presidential decree, both of which contain a definition of torture in line with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
	• On 24 April, UNAMA released its fourth public report on the treatment of conflict-related detainees, which covered the period from January 2015 to December 2016. The release of the report coincided with the second periodic review of Afghanistan by the Committee Against Torture.
	• In April, the Government indicated its intention to withdraw its reservation to the Convention against Torture, and the Cabinet approved, in principle, the decision to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention. In its voluntary pledges and commitments submitted on 6 September 2017 as part of its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council, the Government confirmed its continued commitment to ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (see A/72/377), although implementation of those commitments remains pending.
	• In June, credible reports indicated that the President had issued an order for the execution of 11 death row prisoners in retaliation for the suicide attack in Kabul on 31 May, which killed 92 people and injured 491. As a result of the advocacy of UNAMA, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions issued an urgent appeal calling for the executions to be stopped until the right to a fair trial could be upheld. As a result, the planned executions did not take place.
	• In September, the President endorsed an annex to the Anti-Torture Law, which includes a provision for victims of torture to bring legal claims for redress before criminal and civil courts. The Law and the annex thereto were consolidated into one unified text, which was approved by the upper house of the National Assembly on 14 January 2018. The text is awaiting the President's signature and is expected to be published in the Official Gazette in March 2018.
	• In November 2017, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court made a request to the Pre-Trial Chamber for authorization to initiate an investigation into alleged international crimes committed in Afghanistan since May 2003, including the war crime of torture committed by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. UNAMA continues to promote accountability and to support efforts to address impunity for human rights abuses.
Improved impact of, and support for, legal and policy measures to combat violence against women and girls	• In 2017, the proportion of women in the Afghan National Police increased by 8 per cent, to 3,379. To address the sexual harassment of women in the police force, the Ministry of the Interior continued work to finalize its internal complaints procedure.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• In 2017, prosecution offices for the elimination of violence against women were established in all 34 provinces. Female prosecutors are present in 25 of the 34 provincial offices.
	• In 2017, the Government continued its efforts to increase the role of women in peace processes. On 2 July, 5 new female members were nominated to the High Peace Council, thereby increasing the representation of women to 12 members of a total of 63, with 4 women in the Executive Board and 8 women in the General Assembly.
	• In 2017, the Government continued to implement the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in the promotion of peace and security, and to take measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in armed conflict. Discussions continue between the Government and donors about the funding mechanism and budget for the national action plan.
	• In 2017, UNAMA continued efforts to increase the participation of women in the Afghan civil service, in political and social spheres of life and in peace negotiations. Such efforts included the dialogues to mark the Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security from 17 October to 22 November. The dialogues focused on strengthening the participation of women in all aspects of the electoral process across Afghanistan.
	• The new Penal Code reduces the severity of the punishment under the law for women who commit certain crimes, including adultery. In August, however, the chapter on violence against women was removed from the Code, which was viewed by some as a setback in upholding the Government's commitment to protecting the lives and rights of women.
	• The Government, on 8 March 2017, launched the Women's Economic Empowerment National Priority Programme and, on 8 August, established the Executive Committee on Women's Empowerment to facilitate high-level coordination among national and international stakeholders.
	• On 18 April, the First Lady of Afghanistan launched the national plan of action to eliminate early and child marriage (2017–2021).
Improved awareness of, and support for, legal and policy measures related to combating impunity and furthering transitional justice	• In 2017, UNAMA continued to engage with civil society, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Government to end impunity for human rights violations and seek justice and redress for victims.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• UNAMA raised awareness about provisions in the peace agreement of 2016 between the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) that grant leaders of the group immunity and foresee the release of most prisoners affiliated with the group, which could preclude the prosecution of individuals who may be legally responsible for war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and other gross violations of human rights.
	• In 2017, UNAMA engaged with the Transitional Justice Coordination Group, comprising 20 civil society organizations, to promote efforts for sustainable peace and reconciliation processes. On 26 November, the Group expressed its support for the decision of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to request the Pre-Trial Chamber to initiate a formal investigation into human rights abuses in Afghanistan.
	• In 2017, UNAMA finalized 34 provincial road maps for peace resulting from local consultations conducted in previous years. Provincial road maps will serve as tools for civil society organizations to engage with the Government to promote respect for the rule of law and human rights and to address impunity.
Government fulfilment of reporting requirements on international human rights covenants and conventions and implementation of the recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review of Afghanistan under the auspices of the Human Rights Council	• In March 2017, the Government began to draft the third periodic report of Afghanistan to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which was due to be submitted in July 2017 but is now expected to be submitted in March 2018.
	• In April, UNAMA gave a briefing to the Committee against Torture in closed session in Geneva ahead of the review of the second periodic report of Afghanistan.
	• On 15 August, the Government issued a standing invitation to all special procedures of the Human Rights Council, indicating its willingness for continued engagement with the United Nations human rights mechanisms to promote respect for human rights in the country and to benefit from the expert assessment and recommendations of mandate holders.
	• On 16 October, Afghanistan was elected by the General Assembly to be a member of the Human Rights Council for three years from 1 January 2018. Work is under way to implement the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Government, which contain elements on strengthening the rule of law, the rights of women and children, internally displaced persons and refugees and accountability.
Increased capacity and commitment of the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, as the Afghan national human rights institution, to respect, protect, fulfil and promote human rights	• In 2017, UNAMA continued its engagement with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission on the protection of civilians and the provision of support to human rights defenders and female survivors of violence, and conducted senior-level consultations to promote collaboration with United Nations human rights mechanisms.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• In 2017, UNAMA and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission organized 59 events focusing on preserving and widening civil society space, as well as promoting freedom of expression and inclusive peace and reconciliation processes. The events involved 1,475 participants, of which approximately one third were women, in 27 provinces.

V. Economic and social development

Benchmark: government policies, supported by the international community, that promote sustainable economic growth and contribute to overall stability

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
National priority programmes are developed and implemented with international support and endorsement	• By the end of 2017, the Government had prepared, launched and begun implementation of 2 of the 10 national priority programmes. The remaining 8 programmes are in the preparation phase but are expected to be finalized and launched in 2018.
	• In early 2017, the Government launched the Women's Economic Empowerment National Priority Programme and began its implementation in March.
	• Implementation of the Citizens' Charter National Priority Programme commenced in May 2017.
	• As at 31 December, the national priority programme for the development of the extractives sector was in the final stages of approval by the Government's High Economic Council.
	• In 2017, concept notes or draft texts were developed for the national priority programmes on urban development, agriculture, infrastructure and justice.
More equitable distribution of development assistance and government expenditure throughout Afghanistan	• With ongoing conflict in most parts of the country in 2017, it became increasingly difficult to implement programmes equitably across the country, especially in rural areas. As at late December, implementation of the Citizens' Charter National Priority Programme, the goal of which is to bring basic services and tangible development to remote areas, was being implemented in 32 provinces, 101 districts, 4 cities and nearly 5,000 communities.
	• By 31 December 2017, gender and women's affairs committees, which are mandated to mainstream gender equality initiatives into the work of provincial governments, had been established in all 34 provinces.
Increased revenue collection and sustainable growth based on Afghan resources	• In the first 10 months of 2017, the Government increased revenue collection by 14 per cent, to $1.89 billion, primarily as a result of improvements in the administration and enforcement of tax collection. Owing to the dominance of the informal sector in the economy, most tax revenue continues to be collected from customs, large taxpayers and non-tax revenue sources.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• Despite improvements in revenue collection, the Government is expected to have covered only 40 per cent of budgeted expenditure in 2017, leaving a fiscal gap of 15 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), which is projected to increase to 17.4 per cent in 2020. On-budget foreign civilian development assistance will therefore remain critical to maintaining basic services and implementing development programmes.
	• Although the conflict continued to create insecurity and uncertainty and limit economic growth in 2017, the growth rate increased slightly, from 2.2 per cent in 2016 to 2.6 per cent in 2017.
	• To improve the business climate and avoid stifling growth, the Government is considering several tax measures, such as a value added tax, which would simplify the taxation process for businesses.

VI. Regional cooperation

Benchmark: sustained and effective regional coordination in support of prosperity, peace and stability

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Improved coordination of regional bodies and increased regional investments	• On 1 March 2017, during the thirteenth summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization in Islamabad, member States adopted the Islamabad Declaration and the Vision 2025, in which a road map was set out for greater regional cooperation and integration over the next 10 years.
	• On 15 and 16 March, during high-level talks held in London between Afghanistan and Pakistan, an agreement was reached to improve cross-border trade, economic and security cooperation. The agreement led to the reopening of official border crossing points that had been closed for a few weeks in February and March 2017.
	• On 14 April, a conference on reconciliation in Afghanistan took place in Moscow with participants from Afghanistan, China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Participants reiterated that the conflict in Afghanistan had no military solution and must be resolved through intra-Afghan dialogue on the basis of Security Council resolutions. Participants also called upon the Taliban to engage in direct talks with the Government of Afghanistan.
	• On 7 May, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran visited Kabul and met with senior government officials. Talks between the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran led to a bilateral cooperation agreement and the establishment of five working committees to implement elements of the agreement.
	• On 8 and 9 June, President Ghani participated in the summit of the Heads of States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Astana.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	During the summit, India and Pakistan became full members of the Organization, and it was agreed that Afghanistan would be admitted to the Organization once it resolves its internal conflict. • On 5 August, President Ghani attended the inauguration ceremony of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, in Tehran. Both parties discussed security and economic cooperation, including the Chabahar port and other infrastructure projects. • On 27 August, senior military leaders of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and Tajikistan attended the meeting of the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism in Counter-Terrorism in Dushanbe. • On 11 October, after a seven-year pause, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held a meeting of the Afghanistan Contact Group in Moscow. The Contact Group is a consultative platform that supports Afghanistan in its fight against terrorism, drugs and criminality and provides support for the sustainable development of the country through the Organization's economic cooperation framework. • On 16 October, senior representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and the United States of America participated in a meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group in Muscat to revive peace talks between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to coordinate the return of refugees, taking into account the onset of winter. • During the seventh Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, which took place in Ashgabat on 14 and 15 November, participants reiterated their support to the process of the Conference and the economic development of Afghanistan. In the margins of the Conference, senior officials from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Turkmenistan signed an agreement to build the Lapis Lazuli transport corridor, giving Afghanistan a new, relatively attractive route to ship its products to Europe. • On 30 November, in Istanbul, representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees gathered for the twenty-ninth meeting of the Tripartite Commission. During the meeting, participants reiterated their commitment to joint resource mobilization and lasting solutions for the protracted displacement of Afghan refugees, including their sustainable return and reintegration into Afghanistan. • On 1 December, the seventh Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference on the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan took place in Baku. Discussions focused on regional cooperation and common efforts to fight terrorism and concluded with the adoption of the Baku Declaration, in which participating countries emphasized the central role of regional organizations in fostering stability and prosperity and reaffirmed their commitment to expanded economic cooperation and the implementation of established

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	confidence-building measures. Meetings of senior officials of the Heart of Asia — Istanbul Process were held in March, September and November, and meetings of regional technical groups were held in March, April, August and November. • From 4 to 6 December, during President Ghani's first official visit to Uzbekistan, 20 bilateral agreements were signed, including agreements on the simplification of transit and customs procedures, a bilateral committee on security was established, an Afghan consulate was opened in Termez, and agreement was reached to construct an additional 1,000-km long electricity transmission line from Surkhan-Darya to Pul-e Khumri and a 400-km railroad from Mazar-e Sharif through Shiberghan and Maymana to Herat. • On 21 December, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan received the approval of President Ghani for the organization of the ministerial conference on the theme "Afghanistan — path to a peaceful future" in Tashkent, which is scheduled on 26 and 27 March 2018. • On 26 December 2017, the first dialogue of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan was held in Beijing. • On 29 January 2018, the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, visited Kabul and offered support for the establishment of an Islamic centre, development projects and the establishment of a trinational committee of ulama from Afghanistan, Indonesia and Pakistan to promote peace and reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan.

VII. Partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community

Benchmark: coherent support by the international community for Afghan priorities within an Afghan-led coordination framework

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Increased proportion of aid aligned with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and government priorities	• In 2017, international donors continued to align their bilateral assistance portfolios with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework, a process that will continue in 2018 as the national priority programmes under the Framework continue to be developed and launched.
Improved accountability of procurement and contracting on behalf of the Government and the international community	• According to the National Procurement Authority, as at 31 December 2017, all the contracts signed for 733 high-value projects had been published on its website. • In 2017, the Revenue Department of the Ministry of Finance held bilateral consultations with several donors to discuss the implementation of recommendations from the joint taxation working group in late 2016 to improve the transparency of donor contracts for off-budget programmes.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Strengthening of the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board in support of the Kabul process and as a means of facilitating a regular review of progress on Afghan priorities and mutual commitments	• The Joint Coordination Monitoring Board and the Senior Officials Meeting, which convened in June and October 2017, respectively, succeeded in reinvigorating the regular review of progress made against the development and reform agenda through a new, more discursive format. At the meetings, mutual commitments were confirmed between the Government and international partners and steps were identified for moving forward.

VIII. Counter-narcotics

Benchmark: sustained trend in the reduction of poppy cultivation, narcotics production and drug addiction

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Decrease in poppy cultivation, narcotics production and addiction rates	• Poppy cultivation did not decrease. In 2017, the area under opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan was estimated at 328,000 hectares, a 63 per cent increase from the 127,000 hectares estimated in 2016. Opium production in 2017 was estimated at 9,000 tons, an increase of 87 per cent from the 4,800 tons produced in 2016 and a record high for poppy cultivation in the country.
	• At almost $1.4 billion, equivalent to approximately 7 per cent of the estimated GDP of Afghanistan, the farm-gate value of opium production increased by 55 per cent in 2017 compared with 2016.
Increase in effective interdiction and counter-trafficking efforts	• In 2017, Afghan law enforcement authorities, supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), conducted a total of 2,798 counter-narcotics operations, leading to seizures of 2,366 kg of heroin, 64,757 kg of morphine, 47,178 kg of opium, 121 kg of methamphetamine, 62,086 kg of hashish, 2,322 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) K-tablets (synthetic drugs), 53,046 kg of solid precursor chemicals and 77,272 litres of liquid precursor chemicals. The operations also resulted in the dismantling of 50 heroin and 3 methamphetamine manufacturing laboratories, the arrest of 3,078 suspects and the seizure of 477 vehicles, 217 weapons, 747 mobile phones and 8 radios.
Increase in licit agriculture and related private capital investment in areas previously used for poppy cultivation	• In 2017, UNODC launched seven alternative development projects, worth $6.5 million, in 35 districts of 18 provinces of Afghanistan, targeting 20,000 rural households.

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Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 24 February 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to submit herewith a statement, dated 23 February 2018, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the death of Archil Tatunashvili, a citizen of Georgia who was detained by the Russian occupation regime (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Elene **Agladze**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Deputy Permanent Representative

18-03163 (E) 020318

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Annex to the identical letters dated 24 February 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the death of Archil Tatunashvili, a citizen of Georgia detained by the Russian occupation regime

23 February 2018

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia expresses deep sorrow over the death of citizen of Georgia Archil Tatunashvili in Tskhinvali detained by Russian occupation regime on February 22, 2018 and expresses condolences to his family.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemns the death of Archil Tatunashvili followed after unlawful activities of the occupation regime and according to the existing information, the detention of two more Georgian citizens Levan Kutashvili and Ioseb Pavliashvili.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia appeals to the Co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions to make due and timely reaction, with the aim to determine the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. Tatunashvili, immediately release detainees and give appropriate reaction to this grave fact, for which the Russian Federation is directly responsible, as a force exercising full control on the ground.

Such illegal actions by the occupation regime, victims of which become Georgian citizens, reveals the necessity of immediate creation of international security and human right mechanisms on the ground.

Intensified illegal provocative steps by the Russian Federation, including eradication of barbed-wire fences and other artificial barriers along the occupation line, restriction of freedom of movement and detentions, human rights violations and ethnic discrimination further complicates severe security and humanitarian situation on the ground, deliberately hinders the process of peaceful conflict resolution presents a source of instability and a threat to Georgia as well as the whole region.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia appeals to the international community to give due assessment to the tragic incident as well as actions taken by the Russian occupation regime and give a proper reaction.

http://mfa.gov.ge/News/saqartvelos-sagareo-saqmeta-saministros-ganck-(26).aspx?CatID=5&lang=en-US